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The Pacific Journal of Theology

Journal of the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools (SPATS)

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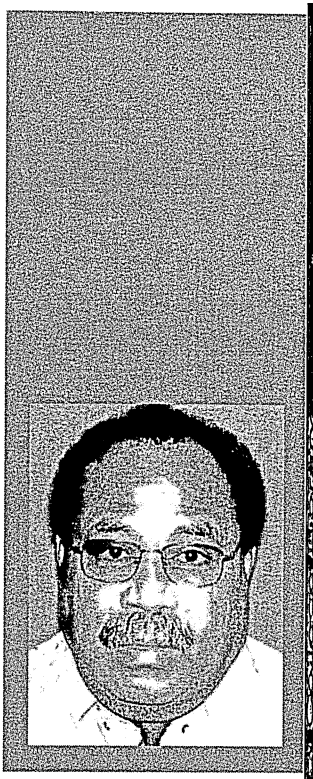
Editorial



Rev. Tevita N. Banivanua

Rev. Tevita Nawadra Banivanua is an Ordained Minister of the Methodist Church in Fiji and is currently the General Secretary of the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools (SPATS)

Ecumenism will be properly understood and practiced if the principles guiding its vision and mission are understood properly. Some of the collections of documents in this issue of the Journal contribute to an understanding of the Ecumenical movement that calls for further in-depth studies.

The ecumenical movement in the region came out strongly during the 1960s and like in most regions of the world; it came as a rippling effect of the ecumenical consciousness that gripped the world in the aftermath of the devastating effect of the Second World War. So much has happened during the time of the 1960's and today in the Pacific region. In the last decade, various calls have been made to those concerned for a re-visitation of the ecumenical spirit of the sixties and also call onto the source itself; the biblical understanding of ecumenical movement especially the call for unity of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St. John Chapter 17 and specifically the Christian understanding of Trinity itself.

That similar spirit of togetherness in diversity is being echoed in the cultural & socio-political arenas of the region. Rev. Dr Asinate Samate seems to be echoing this type of call to her local Tongan people and those in Diaspora. I will come back to this socio-cultural call for togetherness later in this editorial.

Dr. Michael Press in his contribution to this issue argued that because of the growth happening in Pacific Christianity, mainly in the Pentecostal groups, some of which are led by lay preachers that had left their previous denominations by force or otherwise, states that there is a strong spirit of tribalism and selfishness gripping the Churches in the region. For most of these Pentecostal groups, ecumenism is undesirable for it would mean power sharing. Pacific Ecumenism, according to Press and many others that have written on the subject must include diversity. The fact of diversity and the search for the common good does not hinder or obstruct mission but help and is also healthy for it. Tribalism, divisions and selfishness will sure divide the Churches in regions and therefore is not helpful to the mission of the Church as Christ had intended

The Pacific region even though it was one of the first regions in the world to have ecumenical relations with the Roman Catholic Church in the region through the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Pacific (CEPAC); Dr. Press is also calling on both Catholics and Protestants in their ecumenical dialogue to re-visit their different views of the Church. This is to be done in the light of Vatican II which calls for a greater attention and understanding of unity among Christians.

A more similar call for this type of unity is highlighted in Dr. Darius Jankiewicz in his contribution to this issue. Darius' work is on situating Religious Authority in Christianity especially the Church and Individuals. He wanted to present a model of religious Authority that would bring about a much closer or common understanding of authority that would be inclusive. The route to that model is to first understand the two current models, the "dependence model" and then into the "independence model" and their strengths and weaknesses. The

differences found in these two models are not helpful to the call for Church Unity worldwide and he therefore suggested an "Interdependence Model". The dependence model needs to recognize the independence model and following on from Sue Park's "Stages of Young Adult Faith Development", the two models can also be seen from the angle of the individual and community roles in terms of accepting authority. Darius insists that the individuals must be prepared to surrender some of their independence while at the same time the so called unquestionable authority of community must be opened to critical questioning by individuals. This can only happen if there is a meeting ground, a given or agreed space which he calls the interdependence space or model. The New Testament seems to have a vision of the Church which calls for a balance on strong doctrines and independence.

In Rev. Koloma's Concept of the Sacred in Melanesia, a socio-cultural dimension of unity among the people of the Aroma community is explicitly explained. The *Numapura* or the house of meeting at the centre of every Aroma community is where meaning of life in all its relations is derived. The place of taboo space is emphasized. The Aroma community's vision of the cosmos is displayed in this taboo space. Koloma's article ended with the myth of the coconuts and how it was introduced into Aroma. This article is suggesting a meeting place of differences in the *Numapura* and the meeting space is not just for humans but also a place where the "human meets the spiritual" and it is therefore a holy and sacred space.

The ecumenical call in this issue is not only a call for churches to recognize and accept each other as they are, but also a call for some of the socio-cultural dimensions of life in the region to stand together in these trying times of some of the Pacific region nations. Asinate's description of Tonga's coat of arms (God and Tonga are my Inheritance) and Koloma's description of the world view of the Aroma people in Papua New Guinea are in their own ways, calls for the recognition of the other.

The other articles in this issue by Rev. Dr. Mika Paunga and Dr. Andrew Thornley complete the contributions. Fr. Mika's poem crying out for beautiful Nuku'alofa, is indeed a lament of someone far away from home, of the devastating effects of a Pacific Island capital caught up in their struggles for a different type of governance. The questions posed in the poem are something that needs further investigation for a type of democracy that would be meaningful not only in Tonga but throughout the Pacific region.

Andrew's contribution is a call to historically right some of the wrongs that had been done by some very early missionaries in Fiji. The inclusion of this article into this issue is timely since the Fijian language is now offered as a major at the University of the South Pacific (USP). The John Hunt New Testament Bible in Fijian needs to be resurrected for it contains the very earliest written form of the Fijian language. It will surely enhance the status of the Fijian language as a whole.

The contributions to this issue came in a very interdisciplinary manner but as I saw it, a connecting theme is that of ecumenism and it is my hope that you will have a good read.

The Challenge of Ecumenism

Michael Press

Dr. Michael Press is a Lutheran minister and has been a Lecturer at the Pacific Theological College, since 2002.
He received his Doctorate in Theology at the Ecumenical Institute of the University of Heidelberg, Germany and served together with his wife Lidia as a parish minister in Munich in close contact with the neighbouring Catholic congregations. His research interests are ecumenism, the encounter of Western and Pacific theology and the relevance of Western theological traditions for the Pacific.

Ecumenism is not an option. If we take the Gospel seriously, ecumenism is the essence of the church according to the last will of Jesus as pronounced in John 17:21: "I pray that they may all be one. Father, may they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me."

The church is founded on the unity of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We cannot create it, we can only exhibit it. This unity is believed and not subject to our disposition or choice. We confess to believe in the one, holy, apostolic and catholic (meaning universal) church. Oneness is the first attribute and the essence of being a church, because it exists in one Spirit of the one Father and Son. Where Christ is, there is salvation and the one body of Christ. We are all baptized and reborn into this church not through our own will, but through the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

What does it say to the world that we confess the one body of Christ and actually live in separations of more than 100 different churches on nearly all Pacific Islands?[1]
Some argue that the unity and oneness of the church is a spiritual, invisible thing. But this distinction between the invisible and visible world in terms of salvation from the material into the spiritual world was rejected already in the Early Church.

All images for the church in the New Testament are taken from this world, for instance the church as a temple of the Spirit, as the body of Christ, as a congregation or as bride of the Lord. As Paul summarizes to the Ephesians (4:1-5) the unity of the church grows from the one Spirit, the one Lord, the one faith, the one baptism and the one God and Father. If we add the Holy Communion we have the essential characteristics of the universal church. Ecumenism affirms the unity of the church as God-given and calls all churches to express this unity and to advance toward it, in order that the world may believe this witness of the Trinitarian God.

The church fathers and mothers from the Early Church to Martin Luther, John Calvin or John Wesley have acknowledged this visible unity. They did not easily break up the visible unity of the church and always strove to gain it back. Later the history of Protestantism became a history of splitting into ever new sub-churches. A new situation arose when the ecumenical movement questioned whether the historical reasons for separations are still valid today.

In the Pacific, the arrival of Christianity marked a huge ecumenical event. Tahitian and other native evangelists spread the gospel to other islands. Before the arrival of Christianity many people lived in constant fear of an ambush, always carrying their spears and bows and never venturing beyond the clan boundaries. The gospel brought peace and unity where there was division and enmity. The love of God united the tribes as neighbours in Christ. All are children of one God and saved by one Lord.

Unfortunately, this positive effect did not last, mainly for three reasons. First, the heart of the gospel was hidden behind the husk of denominationalism. The religious and political conflicts of the old world were implanted into the new soil of Oceania. Secondly, agreements about mission fields did not result from theological deliberations, but were based on political and economic forces. Financial shortfalls forced Missions such as the London Missionary Society (LMS) to hand over to the Wesleyan missionaries. In some areas, for example in Papua New Guinea, the political authorities divided the country into spheres of influence. The Napoleonic wars prevented the strongest Catholic nation, France, from arriving early to secure their mission fields, but later French Catholics tried to take over the already established LMS Churches in Tahiti, backed by the guns of French naval ships. Thirdly, the denominational competition reinforced the existing tribal competition. For instance, in Samoa the collaboration of the Tongan chief Tâufa'âhau with local Samoan chiefs maintained the promotion of a Wesleyan church despite the agreement between the Wesleyan and LMS mission boards to withdraw the Wesleyan missionaries from Samoa while the LMS withdrew from Fiji. On other islands the chiefly approach of the missions led to group conversions without individual consent, which often resulted in backsliding into syncretistic cults[2] or conversion to other churches in the second wave of mission.

As an historian I respect how faithful the churches are to their founding fathers and mothers. But as a theologian I ask: Do the historical circumstances justify the separation of churches today? Should we use the theology of providence in regard to the fact that historically the form of Christianity on an island depended on which mission ship arrived first at the island or which colonial power backed their missionaries? Is there any providence of God in the decision of governors and mission boards about mission fields? If we have reasons to doubt that these historical coincidences are divine determinations what does this mean for the faithfulness to our own denomination?

The historical diversity of the churches in the Pacific is a fact. Ecumenism does not mean to reverse this. Unity does include diversity like the

diverse cultures of the Pacific. Church unity emerges locally and yet is tied to the universal church in space and time. Not diversity, but divisions cause evil, because they obstruct our Christian witness. In cities such as Port Moresby or Suva or Honiara each Sunday more than 30 different denominations compete for the Christians. This does not only cause rifts in family life. If someone not familiar with Christianity could manage to attend five different denominational worships on any given Sunday, listening to sermons about the same gospel, wouldn't he get lost and most likely discouraged by the conflicting interpretations and the obvious difficulty of the churches to speak with one voice to the burning issues of the time?

Shouldn't we Christians be saddened, that our Lord Jesus Christ has invited all to his table to share his body and blood as signs of our salvation, yet when we answer his call, we have chosen our own tables dividing ourselves? Catholics are not allowed to communicate in a Protestant church, Protestants will be rejected in a Catholic (or Orthodox) church, if the priest follows his orders. Even among Protestants not many accept members from other denominations to their Holy Communion. Churches claim that the Holy Communion is the goal of unity, but it cannot anticipate it. Pope John Paul II emphasized recently: The truth cannot be compromised and as long as we do not agree on this truth, a unity at the table of the Lord would mean to betray the truth.[3] This remark shows that no church can at present claim to be the full church. They all have lost the balance and fullness of the communion with God visible at the table of the Lord.

Therefore ecumenism calls for a renewal, a reformation of all churches. Unity among the churches is not yet visible and therefore a matter of penitence and self-scrutiny. Why do we continue to prevent this unity from being realized? We cannot only blame the missionaries for the scattered landscape of churches in the Pacific. The reason for the ongoing divisions may be found as well in a revival of tribalism and selfishness. Some of the new Pentecostal churches are led by former ministers of the historical churches who were forced to leave.. When the Charismatic Movement took hold among the youth in the Lutheran

Church of Papua New Guinea 20 years ago local leaders pushed these groups out of the church. Only recently the reconciliation process has started. Sometimes the cultural and social contexts urge church leaders to maintain their separateness. Ecumenism is regarded as undesirable because it would mean sharing power. In some cases the local chiefs who also hold leading positions in the church oppose ecumenism, fearing for the status they enjoy in their church..

Ecumenical theological education, of which the Pacific Theological College (PTC) is the flagship in the Pacific, also needs critical scrutiny. Even though many church leaders received ecumenical training they seem to have abandoned the primacy of church unity as soon as they returned to their home church. The recent history of the Pacific Conference of Churches reveals that the majority of church leaders supported the scaling down of a an ecumenical institution with powerful desks which provided space for some criticism of the present state of churches in favor of a weaker organization limited to reacting to the wishes of the national churches[4].

Cultural and personal agendas can become a second source of proclamation besides the gospel. Ecumenism comes to us with the coat of a prophet reminding us that the minister of the one holy universal church is not called to preach the narrow path of a cultural, denominational localism. Don't we see the people suffer under the religious and cultural divisions? We ministers must ask ourselves: Won't we always be tempted to support the division, because it secures our own position, rather than to speak out prophetically for the renewal even under the risk of earning disgrace?

Many people suspect that ecumenism could mean to losing one's identity. If the purpose of ecumenism were to merge churches into one super-church those fears would be correct. But they have no basis in reality. Ecumenical fellowship does not mean uniformity of church life and order. Rather it is based on the mutual recognition of the churches, which might find its expression in a visible unity of the institution while maintaining the diversities in spirituality and tradition. The single Pacific

Island example of church unity is the United Church in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands which according to the words of Leslie Boseto is rooted in the spirit of grassroot communal life and the death of denominational identity at the cross of Christ.[5] However, there were complaints that traditions were neglected and a breakaway church on the Solomon Islands legitimized its existence in the restoration of the original Methodist mission.

Church union does not mean to level out differences. If, for instance, in Samoa a fellowship between the Methodist and Congregational Churches could be realized, the local communities would experience hardly any changes in their way of worshipping and preaching, or in their personal piety and cultural practices. Faith is at home in a specific tradition, which is a legitimate local expression of the one holy apostolic church.

What is the basis for acknowledging a church as a true church of Jesus Christ? It is the salvation that we receive in the church. As the reformation taught us, salvation is unconditional. We are justified by our faith in Christ. That is the central message of the Gospel, on which the church stands in life and death.[6] If we are justified, that means in communion with God by faith and not by any preconditions or works, there is no justification for excluding others from this salvation because of their practices or behaviour. The purpose of the church according to Acts 2:42 is preaching and teaching the gospel (martyria), worship (leiturgia), fellowship (koinonia) and service (diakonia). "The unity of the church to which we are called is a koinonia (fellowship) given and expressed in the common confession of the Apostolic faith; a common sacramental life entered by the one baptism and celebrated together in one Eucharistic fellowship; a common life in which members and ministries are mutually recognized and reconciled; and a common mission witnessing to the gospel of God's grace to all people and serving the whole of creation."[7]

Ecumenical encounters are prone to falling into two traps. On the one side, there is the danger to downplay what churches have in common and to define identity through difference. An example is the common

practice of rebaptism of Christians in most of the Pentecostal churches. The other danger is the cheap ecumenism, that does not respect the differences of traditions and doctrines. In Suva, for instance, you find advertised invitations to an ecumenical worship, usually from one of the new churches. This does not respect the historical identity of the churches as expressed in their doctrines and neglects the necessary efforts to overcome these differences. Often these so called "ecumenical services" aim at winning proselytes, which is far from the spirit of ecumenism.

Unity is a costly thing. The divisions did not come about easily. Separations were caused by deep conflicts about the content of faith, about doctrinal as well as social commitments of the church. The historical challenges of decolonization have put political and social issues at the forefront of the ecumenical debates in the Pacific. The history of PCC illustrates this as well as the difficulties to discuss questions of faith and order.[8] However, differences in the doctrinal understanding of the church will prevent any achievement of unity as long as they are not dealt with. If one church subscribes to essential doctrines that another church feels compelled to reject there can be no fellowship between them.

The purpose of doctrines is to differentiate between the what is necessary to believe for our salvation and what claims undue authority such as the race or nation or culture. Doctrines are for the church what the constitution is for the state. In difference to the constitution doctrines summarize what God has done for us. Therefore they are not self-made but binding in that they express what the church recognizes as the will of God. Over the years ecumenical dialogues have developed helpful methods to clear away historical misunderstandings and to highlight the common basis of controversial doctrines especially through biblical and historical exegesis and in ranking doctrines according to their derivation from the basic principles of faith.

One of the most promising events in Pacific ecumenism was the early and enduring participation of the Roman Catholic Church as member of PCC through the Bishops Conference CEPAC. However, in spite

of the prophetic leadership of Bishop Patelisio Finau who called the Pacific Churches to unity already in 1986[9] no progress has been achieved, for instance in the question of Eucharistic fellowship. Therefore I want to discuss briefly some of the issues in the ecumenical dialogue between Protestant and Catholic churches who differ in content about their view of the church.

The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) wholeheartedly embraced unity among all Christians as one of the principal concerns of the Catholic Church. It also expressed the need for a continual reformation and interior conversion.[10] On the other hand, recent Vatican documents such as "Dominus Jesus" (2000) denied the Protestant Churches the status of being churches and having true apostolic ministries.[11] The differences spring from a different understanding of what the church is. While for Protestants the church is defined by its function—the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of sacraments[12]—Catholic ecclesiology focuses on the institutional aspects of the church as representing the body of Christ in the unbroken apostolic succession of the bishops with the pope as their head. For Catholics this visible church is the instrument and sacrament of salvation.[13] Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conclude that for Protestants the church only testifies about the believers' salvation in Christ, while for Catholics the Catholic Church is the exclusive mediator of salvation and the membership in it a condition for receiving it. If we read the documents of the Second Vaticanum carefully, it is obvious that the church as the "sacrament" of salvation points to Christ in whom alone the faithful find salvation. "Dominus Jesus" represents a rather conservative interpretation identifying the one holy apostolic church of the creed with the Catholic Church.[14] The decree on ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council however stated that those "who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church . . . it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in baptism are incorporated into Christ".[15] This means that outside the institutional body of the Catholic Church, salvation and relationship to God in churches exist.

The Second Vatican Council has also asserted that not all doctrines, practices or customs rank on an equal level. There exists an order or a "hierarchy of truths" according to their relation to the foundation of faith.[16] In avoiding the misleading word "hierarchy" we could speak of fundamental and necessary doctrines and possible or derived doctrines.[17]

Every church needs doctrines to summarize the stories of the bible and to define what has to be said under any conditions at all times and what might be said, but does not have to be said necessarily. We have to say at all times and under all conditions that we are saved by faith through Jesus Christ. But we do not have to say necessarily that this salvation is mediated only in a hierarchically structured church. This is a possible, but not necessary derivation from some biblical texts which depend on the more fundamental texts about salvation in Christ. We have to say on the basis of the scripture that Christ is present in the Holy Communion, but we do not have to define the mode of his presence exclusively to other traditions.[18]

Unity requires a basic consent on the fundamental truths of Christianity, as they are expressed in the Nicene Creed. Are there any doctrines or practices that are regarded as fundamental in the Catholic Church, while a Protestant Church feels obliged to reject them?

To answer this question we should disregard all the customs and practices that developed in history but are by no means necessary or compulsory expressions of faith. Even though a lot of emotional objections are connected with some of these practices ecumenical dialogue has taught us not only to tolerate, but to acknowledge different customs, contextual and traditional practices, for instance the candles in front of the statue of Mary as well as the white clothes or hats introduced by the English missionaries or the integration of traditional dancing in the liturgy. These are traditions that have changed in history and will continue to change. No educated Catholic would, for instance, claim to pray to Mary or the Saints. According to the Catholic Catechism the faith about Mary is based on and illumines the faith in Christ, thus holding her in special

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devotion as "Mother of God" essentially different from the adoration of God and Christ.[19] By canonizing Saints, the Catholic Church proposes faithful persons as models of faith and virtue. They can be called as intercessors in prayer, a practice with which Protestants should have no problem.[20] If we learn to know the others better we will able to understand and acknowledge practices which are not ours.

But aren't there doctrinal differences? Let us look at the seven sacraments in the Catholic Church, while Protestant Churches acknowledge only two. History helps us a lot here. Historically, neither the number nor the title "sacrament" can be a reason for separation. More important is the content and how the respective service is administered and in this we find a striking resemblance. The churches agree that baptism is the sacrament of cleansing from sin and integration into the church and that in the Holy Communion Christ is present. Also the rites of marriage or the ordination of ministers are celebrated similarly, though Protestants do not call it a sacrament.

More crucial is the ordained ministry as according to the traditional Catholic position the Protestant churches have lost the apostolic succession rendering their ministry invalid. For this reason Eucharistic fellowship is denied. However, the ecumenical dialogues have also achieved a level of agreement in this question.[21] An unbroken chain of personal successions of bishops indicated in the laying on of hands can never be proven historically. The meaning of the apostolic succession in the Early Church was to be faithful to the apostolic tradition. Part of this tradition is that the minister is ordained to preach the word of God and to administer the sacraments. Most Protestant churches acknowledge the constitutive necessity and authority of an ordained ministry through which Christ speaks to the congregation.[22] Again, the form of the ordination can be left open to different customs. There are certainly differences in how the different churches regard the ordained ministry in relation to the ministry of all believers. This was the most disputed part of the 1982 ecumenical declaration on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. But all churches including the Catholic Church agreed that ordained ministry should be looked at from the perspective of the

calling of the whole people of God and the ordination of persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing on the dependence of the congregation on Christ and the unity of his body, the church.[23] Furthermore, all churches accept a ministry of oversight (greek: episcope), be it in the form of a bishop or a president or a synod. Finally, the office of the pope as successor of Peter is, according to the New Testament, to be a witness of the gospel and to care for the unity of the church, Matt 16:18f; John 21:17. I assume that most Protestant churches have no difficulties with such a description as long as this office remains void of jurisdictional power.

This very short summary of some of the ecumenical dialogues shows that there are no serious theological differences separating the Protestant from the Catholic Churches. The ecumenical dialogues have reached a convergence on most of the former doctrinal disputes. The Catholic Church has even accepted the central point of the reformation, justification by faith, as essential to all truths of faith and thus a consensus in basic truths has been reached.[24] However, there is still a long way to go until the churches adopt the results of these dialogues. Thus far the Catholic Church feels itself bound to doctrines and traditions of its history, which prevent a further rapprochement with the Protestant Churches. Obviously, to reach a convergence in comparing doctrines is only one important, but insufficient, step towards unity. A sharing of liturgy and common action, a mutual acceptance of ministries must follow. They follow only if churches are willing to reform and renew themselves and to give away a part of their power.

In the Catholic Church as well as in many Protestant Churches we can observe conflicting tendencies. Those in favour of ecumenism have weakened in the last decade. In a situation of unease for many mainline churches—caught between secularization and fundamentalism—denominationalism has returned. The old truths are closer and safer than the risky steps towards transformation. Therefore the churches need to be reminded that they are not created for their own sake. The call to ecumenism is a prophetic call reminding us that the churches serve God and not themselves. The kingdom of God cannot be

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identified with any existing church. Thus the church must continually renew itself in order to conform to the new being in Christ. We can be proud of our traditions and cultures but they should never replace the orientation towards the transforming Spirit of the kingdom. We should patiently respect different attitudes towards traditions and trust in the renewing work of the Spirit..

The existence of any church is based on its response to the grace of God. In following Christ the church has to become a servant to others. To become a servant means to act vicariously, as Christ died for us, vicariously, at the cross. The unity of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit is rooted in this event of his death and resurrection. Any church has to undergo this transformation of dying and rising with Christ (Rom 6) in seeking to display the ecumenical catholicity and fellowship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Rom 12:2ff). Therefore, one of the core questions of ecumenism is: When do the diversities that churches maintain between them become illegitimate?[25] I will point out only a few arguments: Is it a legitimate diversity if a local church continues to worship in its context of a certain language or culture such as the Samoan in New Zealand without joining the existing New Zealand churches, because this allows the Samoan migrants to listen to the gospel in terms of their own culture? From the perspective of unity this contextual mission becomes problematic if it no longer communicates the oneness of the body of Christ, but affirms the segregating interests of its members.[26] The existence of separate churches in one location for contextual and cultural reasons is provisional and must be balanced with the mutual fellowship with other churches and the promotion of growth towards the unity of the body of Christ.

If churches are willing to accept ecumenical fellowship as a priority and obligation coming from Jesus Christ, then important changes in the life and order of churches in this fellowship will take place: First and foremost, the invitation to the table of the Lord will be faith-connecting instead of faith-dividing. There will be a growing mutual enrichment of our piety from getting to know and to share the other tradition.

Secondly, this fellowship implies the mutual recognition of ministry and decision making: All important worship and decisions will be strengthened by the participation of fellow churches. Ministers of the fellow church will be accepted and might even apply for vacant positions in another church. Resources will be shared and decisions will be more ecumenical.

Thirdly, common witness allows us to speak with one voice to the world as the Paraclete in the gospel of John demands from us. In all important social activities and prophetic statements concerning the relationship to politics and economics, preservation of the environment, alleviation of poverty and matters of social concern the churches will speak and act with united force. Resources and programs such as educational activities or youth fellowships will be more powerful. Many churches today in the Pacific deny their social responsibility. For them, the church should care only for the souls. Religion is the individual relationship to God, the fight against the sin of the flesh. The social sins of mass unemployment and the destruction of our environment are of no concern to them. Many of these churches even blame the ecumenical movement for its social and political commitment. One answer to these churches is that no church by itself, but only the ecumenical fellowship of churches is able to cope with the present social challenges. The ecumenical movement can provide an alternative to economic globalization, because ecumenism itself is a global endeavour. In contrast to economically driven globalization, the only power of ecumenism is that of a vision and the word to proclaim that vision. Moral formation is one of the prime tasks of the church and a clear Christian vision must guide it. Only a truly ecumenical vision, which inspires the visible example of an ecumenical fellowship, will move our hearts and thoughts to work for a better world.[27]

Ecumenism means to be in a network of relationships, a communion in which we experience similar stories, share our contextual symbols and connect them to the story of God in Jesus in our worship and living discipleship, peace-making, caring for creation and seeking justice. Such an ecumenical spirituality needs time and a space to listen to each

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other, to learn from each other and to receive one another's stories. It needs time to heal the separations of the past and to overcome the mistrust of the present. Therefore I would like to end with some practical recommendations:

- Create a climate of trust and fellowship between churches. Do not pray only for your own church, but explicitly include the other churches in your prayer.
- Frequently visit other denominations and invite them to yours, to learn to know each other better. Youth groups, women's fellowship, bible study groups should invite their fellow groups from other churches or even create one common group. Special workshops on all levels should engage in dialogue. The pastors of different denominations could establish a closer relationship through regular inter-church meetings.
- Participate more often in common worship. If people learn to celebrate together, they will understand that their spiritual basis is the same. Any review of church liturgies and hymns should be done ecumenically in close cooperation with other churches.
- Invite representatives of neighbouring denominations to all important feasts and gatherings of your church, e.g. baptism, confirmation, Easter, White Sunday, and likewise to your circuit or general assembly. Invite them to address your church and encourage them to report about their experience in their church.
- Invite representatives of other churches to your annual conference, with the right to speak to the issues.
- Encourage frequent cooperation between local theological schools, for instance through a well established program of exchange of lecturers and students.
- In the curriculum of all theological schools the thorough knowledge of the other Christian traditions should become indispensable. In showing doctrinal and historical disagreements, the current methods to reach convergence and consensus shall be employed. The question "what keeps us apart?" should become a regular point of discussion in church

meetings and conferences. Also the practical traineeship in another church than your home church could become part of the formation.

- Establish joint working groups and agreed syllabuses for Christian Education in schools, bible studies and youth groups.
- Encourage local and regional cooperation and interchange of ministers on positions such as hospital or school chaplaincy.
- Foster cooperation on the local level for the common good. The local elders, chiefs and church leaders should gather regularly to discuss plans for improving the community. All congregations work together, for example in environmental, maintenance or beautification projects. The congregations experience the advantages of togetherness and unity.

Let me end with an optimistic outlook at the avenue of ecumenism in the Pacific.

The first step would be that churches that are very close to each other in their doctrinal basis and history, such as the Methodist and Congregational Churches in Samoa, proceed toward church fellowship. This would basically mean mutual acceptance of ministries, pulpit and altar fellowship, not necessarily a common administration and shared financial resources, though this would be a natural aim for the future. A second step could be taken in regard to the other ecumenical churches represented in the National Council of Churches. In such provisional fellowship each church maintains its independence and identity, but it accepts full koinonia or community with the other church. All differences in interpretation of the scripture, in practices and doctrines would then be internal family affairs rather than excluding disputes. The time is ripe for more ecumenism in the Pacific.

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Notes

[1] Manfred Ernst (ed.): *Globalization and the re-shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands* (Suva: PTC 2006), part II.
[2] Cf. Alan R. Tippet, *Solomon Islands Christianity* (London: Lutterworth Press 1967), 212-66.
[3] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (April 17, 2003) paragraph 35.
[4] The approval of that reduction of PCC and the abolishment of the desks after 1997 is documented in the Pacific Conference of Churches 8th General Assembly Report, Cook Islands, 11-18 September 2002, Suva, 20-29.
[5] Leslie Boseto, The Phase of Transformation. The United Church: The Will and The Gift of God-Some Historical Reflections, PJTh, Series II, No 14 (1995), 91-104.
[6] The centrality of the justification by faith and in Christ was recently confirmed in the international dialogue between the Lutheran and Catholic Churches, bringing the main dispute of the reformation era to an end, cf. *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church, in: *Growth in Agreement II. Reports and Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level 1982–1998* eds J. Gros, H. Meyer, W.G. Rusch (Geneva: WCC 2000) 569 (No 18): "Therefore the doctrine of justification ... is more than just one part of Christian doctrine...It is an indispensable criterion which constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ."
[7] Seventh Assembly of the WCC, Canberra, 1991, in: *The Ecumenical Movement. An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, eds M. Kinnamon and B.E. Cope (Geneva: WCC 1997), 124.
[8] The discussion of the BEM document (1982) through the PCC was delayed until 1994 and 1996. Only the baptism and eucharist part where discussed with little achievements in terms of unity among the churches.
[9] Cf the keynote address of Bishop Finau in Pacific Conference of Churches Report of the Fifth Assembly September 14-24. 1986, Apia, Western Samoa, Suva: Lotu Pasifika 1987, 11-19.
[10] Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* of the Second Vatican Council No. 1, 6, 7, in Kinnamon 1997, 27 and 32.
[11] *Dominus Jesus. Declaration On the Unity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*, The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, August 2000, No. 16.

[12] Cf. the classic definition of the (Lutheran) Augsburg Confession (1525) Article 7: "For it is sufficient for the the true unity of the church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine word.".. [13] The Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution of the Church *Lumen Gentium* 14 says: "Fully incorporated into the society of the Church are those who...accept all the means of salvation given to the church together with her entire organization, and who...are joined in the visible structure of the Church of Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops." cf. 48, 139.
[14] Since 2000 "Dominus Jesus" has been criticized by high ranking Catholics, e.g. Cardinal Kaspar, the president of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity.
[15] Unitatis Redintegratio 3 (Kinnamon, 29).
[16] Unitatis Redintegratio 11 (Kinnamon, 33). According to O. H. Pesch, "Hierarchy of Truth" - and Ecumenical Praxis, in: *Concilium* 2001, 59-74, here 63f. The authors of this statement meant to differentiate the order of the goal from the order of means: Goal is the salvation in Christ, means are the sacraments, the hierarchical offices, the apostolic succession.
[17] D. Ritschl, Wege ökumenischer Entscheidungsfindung, in W. Huber, D. Ritschl, T. Sundermeier ed. *Ökumenische Existenz heute* (München: Kaiser 1986), 40f.
[18] These methods are successfully employed in the bilateral dialogues between the Catholic Church and all major Protestant Churches, collected in H. Meyer and L. Vischer (eds), *Growth in Agreement. Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level* (Geneva: WCC 1984), 61-130 (Anglican/Roman Catholic); 167-276 (Lutheran/Roman Catholic); 433-464 (Reformed/Roman Catholic); 307-388 (Methodist-Roman Catholic).
[19] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition 1994 (English translation for Australia: St. Pauls 2000), 487 and 971. The title "Mother of God" was given to Mary in the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus 431.
[20] ibid. 828. At the same time all faithful are called to the perfection of sanctity or sainthood, ibid. 825, cf. Lumen Gentium 11.3.
[21] For the understanding of the "apostolic succession" as faithfulness to the apostolic origin and tradition, which cannot be confined to a historical succession of bishops, see for instance BEM 34-38 or the Lutheran/Roman Catholic "Malta Report" 1972, 52f, 57f; further: The Ministry in the Church 1981, 59-66; the Anglican/Roman Catholic Document on "Ministry and

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Ordination" 1973, 4, 14, 16; the Methodist/Roman Catholic Honolulu Report 1981, 33-38– all published in *Growth in Agreement* 1984.

[22] Cf. for instance the Anglican–Roman Catholic Conversation on Ministry and Ordination 1973 and Authority in the Church 1976 and 1981 (*Growth in Agreement*
1984, 79-84, 90-117), and the document on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM), 1982, ibid. 482ff

[23] Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM) 1982, part 3, no 6.8. 12. See also: *Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry 1982/1990. Report on the Process and Responses.* Faith and Order Paper 149 (Geneva: WCC 1990), 74-88 and the clarifications 120ff.

[24] see note 7 above.

[25] See for instance M. Kinnamon: *Truth and Community: Diversity and its limits in the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC 1988).

[26] Leslie Newbigin: What is "a Local Church Truly United"? in *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, eds M. Kinnamon and B.E. Cope, Geneva 1997 (originally 1976), 118f.

[27] Since the the statement of the WCC General Assembly in Harare 1998: "The logic of globalization needs to be challenged by an alternative way of life of community in diversity" the worldwide ecumenical movement is working on this alternative vision. The result was the AGAPE document issued at the WCC Assembly 2006, available at http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/agape-new.pdf, quotation on page 1f.

Rediscovering Scripture Translation in Fiji

A reflection on the first translation of the Fijian New Testament, including reference to the discussion of the translation of the New Testament in Fiji, in Raymond Rickards In Their Own Tongues: The Bible in the Pacific (Bible Society, Suva and Canberra, 1996)

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From 1797, Christian missionaries lived among the peoples of the Pacific seeking their conversion. Among the earliest Protestant denominations, such as the London Missionary Society and the Wesleyans, the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages was seen as a primary method of conversion. This became possible once the spoken language was given an alphabet, an essential preliminary task of the missionaries. Translation of Scripture followed, often commencing with Old Testament books such as Genesis and Psalms and the New Testament Gospels. Stories of missionary translation are widely known and have been brought together most recently in Raymond Rickards, *In Their Own Tongues: The Bible in the Pacific.* What is less well known are the number of translations that have been lost, dispensed with or significantly amended in the two hundred years since Protestant missionaries first entered the Pacific. In the pages that follow, I will attempt to retrace the steps leading to the first translation of the New Testament into Fijian and its subsequent 'journey' into

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obscurity. In so doing, I will be commenting on some of the key points raised in the chapter on Fiji by Rickards.[1]

The Fiji narrative begins in Tonga, the islands to which Wesleyan missionaries first went in 1822. From 1830 onwards, having achieved a degree of stability and success in Tonga and having become aware of a large group of unevangelised islands to the west of Tonga which provided a constant attraction to Tongan men looking for adventure and prowess, the Wesleyans sought the resources and means to expand their efforts to Fiji. In 1834, having received endorsement for their plans from the mother society in London, the missionaries in Tonga nominated two men from amongst their group, William Cross and David Cargill, to commence work in Fiji.

Cross and Cargill, together with their families, gathered on the northern Tongan island of Vava'u and waited for a sailing vessel to take them westwards to the Lakeba, the chiefly centre of the Lau Islands in Fiji. Transport was infrequent and they experienced a long delay. Reflecting the biblical focus of the Wesleyans, the two missionaries used their time devising an appropriate orthography for the Fijian language, this partly in preparation for translation work. They were assisted by converts from eastern Fiji, many of whom had customary links in Tonga. David Cargill was particularly well qualified for language work: he was trained in classical languages, holding a Master's Degree from King's College, University of Aberdeen. William Cross was more typical of Wesleyan missionaries, a self-taught man with an intense desire to place the scriptures in the hands of his converts. Before his appointment to Fiji, he had translated many bible passages, working from English into Tongan.

The most productive result of Cross and Cargill's work on Vava'u was the printing of a Fijian primer and catechism: *A Vosa Vaka Viji I Manda*, which included a preliminary alphabet, the numerals, syllabic groups of words, a catechism and The Lord's Prayer. The two missionaries each contributed to the development of a Fijian orthography, five vowels and, together with the consonants, a single

letter to represent a single sound. This considerable achievement was not without its challenges and indeed led to one of the celebrated moments in Fiji Christian history. The main problem that Cross and Cargill faced in keeping to the 'one letter-one sound' principle was in dealing with the consonant combination of 'th', which was a common sound in Fiji. To try and solve this, Cargill wrote to John Hobbs, the missionary printer on the southern Tongan island of Tongatapu, requesting him to cast some Greek *thetas* so that a single letter would act for the 'th' sound. Such letters, however, Hobbs did not have on his printing press (and from a modern perspective it was probably just as well since no widely-used keyboard today carries a *theta*). Hobbs then chose the unused letter 'c' to represent the sound 'th', a unilateral decision greatly resented by Cargill, who unsuccessfully tried to overturn the printer's actions. More than 150 years later, the western world (not the Fijian) still finds difficulty in mastering Hobb's peculiar linguistic innovation.[2]

Somewhat surprisingly, Rickards chooses to overlook this little drama in the birthing of Fiji's language. Such an oversight can be forgiven but not his claim that Fiji's orthography was developed on the Fijian island of Lakeba when in fact, as we have seen, this was completed in Tonga before the missionaries set off for Fiji.[3]

Cross and Cargill eventually were brought to Lakeba in October 1835 and Wesleyan work began. Scripture translation remained a high priority and this was at first done in the Lakeba dialect, which was spoken throughout the Lau Islands. In 1837, Cross opened a second mission station at Rewa, further to the west, on the main Fijian island of Viti Levu. There he was exposed to the greater influence of two predominant Fijian dialects, that of Rewa and Bau districts, the latter being the language of the rising chief, Ratu Seru Cakobau. Meanwhile back on Lakeba, by 1839, Cargill - who now carried additional authority as the first Chairman of the Fiji Mission - completed a Wesleyan catechism and the book of Mark followed by the other gospels. As the more able linguist of the pioneering missionaries, Cargill was eager to

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consolidate the Lakeba dialect and make it the accepted language for all scripture translations as Christianity expanded throughout Fiji.

In his assessment of this dialect issue in Fiji, Rickards asserts that the missionaries found no "great" differences between Bau and Lakeba dialects.[4] In fact there was considerable difference, a point conceded by Cargill's biographer: "The vulnerability of Cargill's language studies lay in his curious attitude toward variation. It seems inconceivable that he was as blind to the complexities of language variation as his actions as Chairman indicated. Even Cross had realised early (February 1837) that the languages of Rewa and Lakeba, for example, were sufficiently different as to necessitate separate translations".[5] Until his premature departure from Fiji in 1840 - following the untimely death of his wife – Cargill vigorously endeavoured to secure acceptance for the general employment of the Lakeba dialect. So passionate was he about his language work that Cargill intended to return to Fiji with his young family after he had gone to England and remarried, but he only got as far as Tonga and died there in 1843. His advocacy for the Lakeba dialect lost its impulse once he was gone from Fiji since the proposal received no support from either William Cross or John Hunt, the more able of the second contingent of Wesleyan missionaries, who had arrived in Fiji at the beginning of 1839.

Hunt had received training in the biblical languages while studying at the Wesleyan seminary at Hoxton in England. His first posting was with Cross at Rewa and the new missionary proved adept at picking up the different dialects. The two men at Rewa agreed that scripture translation would eventually have to resolve upon one dialect and they favoured the Bau dialect because of the political pre-eminence of Cakobau, whose influence extended over most of central and eastern Fiji as well as parts of the coastlands of western Fiji. The decision to opt for the Bau dialect was eventually made in 1844, a significant date as correctly noted by Rickards.[6] Hunt admitted the choice was not simple: "The Bau dialect is very imperfectly understood in very many places, so that the people of these islands will be a long time before they will derive much instruction by means of books".[7]

In making their decision, the missionaries effectively handed over the major responsibility for translation to John Hunt, now Chairman of the Wesleyan Mission and stationed on the island of Viwa, close to the pre-eminent island of Bau. While each of the seven missionaries throughout Fiji continued their individual translation work, Hunt was the acknowledged expert in the Bau dialect. Writing from his station on the northern island of Taveuni, Thomas Williams - the celebrated missionary ethnographer who struggled constantly with translation - was happy to concede Hunt's pivotal role: "He [Hunt] had so steadily grown into assured confidence of his co-workers that he naturally occupied the position of translator-in-chief".[8]

It was now 1845. The unsettled state of Rewa saw Thomas Jaggar (and the printing press) join Hunt at Viwa; with them too was John Watsford, a newly appointed missionary. In March of that year, Jaggar completed a translation of the gospel of John and Watsford worked with him in revising it. Meanwhile, Hunt translated the books of Hebrews, Acts and Matthew. He sent drafts of Matthew and Romans to fellow missionaries James Calvert at Lakeba and Richard Lyth at Taveuni. Hunt admitted to trusting only his own judgement. "I have gone through St Matthew", Hunt told Lyth, "as if nothing had been done in it at all, not finding Mr C[argill]'s translation of much use to me".[9] This remark by Hunt was not necessarily intended to cast aspersions on Cargill's proficiency as a linguist; indeed Hunt like all the early missionaries relied on Cargill's early translations in the Lakeba dialect to gain their preliminary knowledge of the language. Rather Hunt was facing the reality that translations in any dialect other than Bau were only of limited assistance to him. In his account of bible translation in Fiji, Rickards properly records Hunt's role as chief translator and concurs with the assessment that Hunt appeared to gain little help from Cargill's translation work. However Rickards incorrectly attributes the gospel of John exclusively to Watsford when it was Jaggar who had done the major preliminary work..[10]

By 1846, Hunt recognized that Jaggar's presence on Viwa, with his printer's experience, provided the opportunity to publish the entire New

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Testament on the island. At the annual meeting of Wesleyan missionaries in July, Hunt told his colleagues that he wanted to complete the New Testament in 12 months. Hunt's urgency was brought about partly by increasingly serious bouts of illness (his symptoms suggest that he was suffering from attacks of angina) and by the realization that he had the manpower to complete the work..[11] His fragile physical condition precluded any thought of taking the manuscript to England and using the resources of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Calvert and Lyth, the senior missionaries along with Hunt and Jaggar, supported the acceleration of the New Testament project. They were both delighted with their Chairman's translations: "What I have seen from Bro. Hunt", wrote Calvert, "far surpasses Mr Cargill's translations".[12] To further assist Hunt, Lyth was shifted from Taveuni to Viwa, to serve as a grammarian in checking the final New Testament draft.

Hunt felt confident to explain his key translation principles in October 1846. Assisted by his reading of the commentaries on the Greek New Testament which he had available to him from his Hoxton days, Hunt wrote, "I am more and more convinced of the great importance of giving the Fijians correct idiomatic translation of the Word of God". This formed the cornerstone of his policy. Hunt thus freed himself from the slavish adherence to literal or word-for-word translation. He also avoided the use of "all the peculiar idioms of Scripture" in cases where he was able to find suitable alternatives in Fijian.[13] This proved a challenge as Hunt knew the Fijian language to be rich in words of physical action but not mental process. The results of his innovative thinking are a more adventurous and original translation style in the later books of the New Testament.

In a sustained burst of activity, Hunt completed his translation in April 1847. The drafts were handed over to Jaggar, Watsford and Lyth for checking and then to Jaggar for printing. Jaggar achieved a remarkable effort in printing 1,000 copies of the New Testament by July 1847 and they were distributed to the various mission stations.[14]

In light of the previous support that Hunt had received for his work, the response from the missionaries to the New Testament proved surprisingly mixed. The two main detractors were Watsford and Calvert and their views, though in the minority, were (for reasons mainly connected with their lengthy life-spans) to have the greater influence as the years went by. Watsford's praise of the finished translation was muted. Though conceding that Hunt was "better acquainted with the Fijian language than any other missionary", Watsford qualified this opinion by claiming the translations could be improved and further corrected "as the language is better known". He would not be satisfied until there was further revision.[15] James Calvert also called for a "well-revised" second edition. He disliked Hunt's free methods of translation, calling them "dangerous ground to tread on". Calvert preferred a simpler style of translation: "Would it not be better", he queried of Thomas Williams, "to be always literal where the meaning would not be thereby obscured?"[16]

The majority of Hunt's missionary brethren warmly welcomed the New Testament. Thomas Williams, the least proficient linguist, recalled that when the completed translation reached his mission station at Taveuni, he read a succession of "idiomatic, forceful passages" and concluded that the marked superiority of this translation over the scripture fragments which had already appeared, "sent a thrill of grateful gladness through the heart of Christianized Viti".[17] Richard Lyth, the grammarian who had helped to carry out the final checking of the proof pages, described the New Testament as "a most faithful translation, remarkably correct and uniform, in its language truly idiomatic, in style pure and dignified".[18]

The most important missionary commentator on Hunt's work was David Hazlewood, in Fiji since 1844 and stationed with Williams at Taveuni. A student of both Greek and Hebrew, Hazlewood had been anxious to be involved in the translation of the New Testament but the isolation of Taveuni made it difficult, while his natural reticence as a missionary relatively new to Fiji found him not promoting his own cause. During his short but valuable stay in Fiji, Hazlewood was guided

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into Old Testament translation and also completed an authoritative dictionary and grammar of the Fijian language. He received his copy of the New Testament on 10 August 1847. Taking a request from his Chairman to heart, Hazlewood read through the entire New Testament, "comparing it verse for verse with the Greek". At the end of his reading, he extolled Hunt's labours: "My wonder and admiration of the work as a whole I cannot fully express. The finger of God is evident in the translation; human skill could not have so done it". Hazlewood's views never departed from his initial praise. Writing five years later, he continued to admire Hunt's translation: "there were passages that could not have been written except by one who was well acquainted with native customs and modes of thinking". In undertaking his own work on the Old Testament, Hazlewood regarded Hunt's approach as a "good model for all future translations".[19]

John Hunt died in October 1848. He left corrections – typographical errors – to be done and these were carried out, ironically, by Watsford and Calvert, the missionaries least sympathetic to Hunt's Fijian expression. Rickards in his account claims that the revision was the work solely of Watsford but this is incorrect. In his published mission history, Calvert, who shifted to Viwa after the death of Hunt, places himself in the centre of this story when he says that "the missionaries at Viwa revised the first edition". The brevity of this statement gives no indication of the extent of the textual changes and Watsford added little in way of explanation when he stated simply that "many alterations and corrections had to be made". 3,000 copies of this corrected edition were published on Viwa in 1853. Major revisions were not made at this stage.[20]

Two years later, in 1855, Calvert left Fiji for England, his task to revise the existing Fijian scriptures. Sailing via Sydney, he collected the manuscript copy of the Old Testament translation which Hazlewood had completed in 1855 a few weeks before he died at Maitland, NSW. Hazlewood was only 36, coincidentally the same age as John Hunt was when he passed away some seven years previously. Their premature deaths seemed to clear the path for Calvert to exert a dominant influence

in the emerging shape of the Fijian Bible, in particular the New Testament. Why Calvert considered it necessary to have yet another New Testament revision so soon is a matter of mystery. As one missionary said in exasperation, "When are we to have an end to alterations?" It can only be assumed that Calvert would not be satisfied until the New Testament reflected his more literalistic approach to the Fijian language. In London, Calvert worked closely with Mr Mellor, a linguistic editor with the Bible Society. The subsequent 1858 revised edition carried the imprint of a missionary unskilled in translation and an advisor barely knowledgeable in the language. The arrival of this new edition in Fiji was greeted with dismay by the senior missionaries: "We have much that is not Fijian", said the Mission Chairman William Moore of Calvert's efforts, "not the sense of the Holy Spirit, but Fijian vakapapalagi [anglicized phrases] and making what was clear into mud".[21]

Most missionaries agreed with Moore and the available evidence, though limited, suggests that Fijians did as well. When the German scientist, Berthold Seeman, visited Taveuni in 1860, he was greeted by Adi Eleanor, wife of the Cakaudrove chief, Ratu Goleanavanua, and niece to Cakobau. She was a Christian and tried "frantically" to "kerekere" [beg] Seeman's Fijian New Testament; he acceded to her request. Her delight, recorded Seeman, "was much increased by the volume being the Viwa [1847] edition, which is preferred to the London [1858], not only because it is a larger book and printed in the islands, but also because in the recent London edition some changes have been introduced of which the natives do not approve".[22]

The seal of authorisation was finally placed upon Calvert's revised 1858 New Testament in 1901, when it was included along with a fresh Old Testament revision; both issued in a one-volume Fijian Bible and published in great numbers by the Bible Society. That edition is still used in churches today, although the New Testament was given a further (but not substantial) revision in the 1970s. The Bible Society in Fiji is also currently engaged in a revision of the Old Testament. But

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of the original 1847 New Testament, very little is known; it is testimony that history can indeed be hidden even if the evidence, thankfully, has not been entirely obliterated.

Before arriving at our summary, one further matter requires our attention, even though it carries a greater degree of speculation than the material already dealt with. The subject of linguistic variation in the succeeding editions of the Fijian New Testament is not an issue that, having emerged into the spotlight of history, can rest comfortably on the edges. In a recent article on the development of the Fijian language, Paul Geraghty, respected scholar of Fijian dialects, claims that the missionaries did a disservice to the written form of the language with their "substandard" Fijian of the first bible translation. Far from adopting the pure Bau dialect, Geraghty asserts that the missionaries borrowed heavily from David Cargill's Lauan translations and then added their own "anglocentric notions of grammatical correctness".[23] To adequately refute Geraghty's argument - for his is a significant critique - would require far more expertise and research than I have at my disposal. Suffice to say that the evidence presented in this article may suggest that Geraghty's criticisms apply more credibly to the revisions of Calvert, which are much more widely used in present-day Fiji, than to the scarcely-known original works of John Hunt and David Hazlewood. Such an explanation is possible and tentative at this stage. Certainly the whole topic of Bible translations and their subsequent revisions requires considerably more attention in the years ahead, not just for Fiji but I would suggest for many islands in the Pacific.

Turning then to some final words: the hidden history of the first Fijian New Testament and its disappearance under the weight of revisions, forms one part of our conclusion. The second part relates to the critique of *In Their Own Tongues: The Bible in the Pacific.* In his chapter on the translation of the Bible into Fijian, Rickards makes seven major points relevant to the publication of the first Fijian New Testament. In summarising those points let us also provide an assessment:

1. The Fijian orthography, says, Rickards, was decided upon in Lakeba. This is not correct; the orthography was devised at Vava'u in Tonga before Cross and Cargill left for Fiji.
2. Rickards is right in saying that John Hunt, the eventual translator of the New Testament, made very little use of Cargill's translation of St Matthews Gospel, not primarily because of Cargill's abilities but because Hunt quickly experienced the dominance of the Bau, and to a lesser extent the Rewa, dialects in central Fiji.
3. The missionaries, says Rickards, found no "great" differences between Bau and Lakeba dialects. This was not the case at all; there was sufficient difference between the eastern and central Fijian dialects for Hunt to be critical of Cargill's persistence in claiming that the scriptures could be translated in the Lakeba dialect and adequately satisfy the linguistic needs of all Fiji.
4. Between 1843 and 1844, Rickards correctly notes the change in mission policy from translation in several dialects to the decision to adopt the Bau dialect as the exclusive dialect for the New Testament.
5. Rickards claims that John Watsford was primarily responsible for translating the gospel of John. In fact it was Thomas Jaggar who did the initial translation while stationed at Rewa. He then later revised the gospel on the island of Viwa, assisted by Watsford. Hunt accepted this revision into his New Testament; the Rewan influence is noted by Fijians today.
6. In 1846, says Rickards, Hunt was nominated as the sole translator for the New Testament, with Richard Lyth being brought to Viwa as an assistant with the grammar. This is right but it should be added that Jaggar and Watsford provided help with the reading and checking of Hunt's drafts.
7. Rickards claims that the revision of the New Testament, after Hunt's death in 1848, was the work of John Watsford. Indeed Watsford was involved but so was James Calvert and he had a greater influence on the final shape of the revised New Testament.

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Of these seven major points, Rickards is either incorrect or wayward in his interpretation of four of them. Despite these flaws, his key argument remains valid: John Hunt, not Calvert nor Watsford nor any other missionary, provides the vital clue in explaining the publication of the first translation of the New Testament. The loss of some of Hunt's idiomatic spirit and other considerable changes in later editions is to be lamented and will only be made good with the rescuing of his labours from the depths of neglected history. The bi-centennial of Hunt's birth occurs in 2012, which permits a sufficient period to make good the wayward paths of time.

Notes

[1] The main references for this essay are missionary letters and documents, held at the Mitchell Library, Sydney [ML]. Most of this material has been cited in my three books on early Fiji Methodism: *A Shaking of the Land* (IPS/Suva, 2005), *The Inheritance of Hope* (IPS/Suva, 2000) and *Exodus of the I Taukei* (IPS/Suva, 2002). The notes in this article will include both the original reference and the relevant book reference.

[2] Cargill to Wesleyan Secretaries, 25 May 1835, FM4/1418, Mitchell Library [ML], Sydney. See *A Shaking of the Land*...113 and n.43,119.

[3] Raymond Rickards, *In Their Own Tongues: The Bible in the Pacific*, Bible Society, Suva and Canberra, 1996, 204.

[4] *In Their Own Tongues*... 209.

[5] Albert J. Schutz, *The Diaries and Correspondence of David Cargill*, 1832-1843, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1977, 259.

[6] *In Their Own Tongues* ...211.

[7] Hunt to Wesleyan Secretaries, 17 Oct. 1844, FM4/1431-2, ML, cited in *Inheritance of Hope*...266.

[8] Thomas Williams, 'A Short Account of the Translation of the Bible in the Fijian Language, c1885', B 461, ML, cited in *Inheritance of Hope* ...267. Williams' ethnographic work can be found in J. Calvert and T. Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians*, London 1858.

[9] Hunt to Lyth, 10 Feb. and 28 March 1845, A 836, ML, cited in *Inheritance of Hope*...335.

[10] *In Their Own Tongues*...212 – 3. See Thomas Jaggar to Wesleyan Secretaries, 3 March 1845: "I am now translating John's Gospel, which is nearly completed, independent of being examined." FM4/3044, ML. It is very difficult to accept Watsford's claim that he translated the gospel of John, as he did not arrive in Fiji until August 1844. On the matter of Cargill's abilities as a translator, it is not the primary purpose of this article to make particular judgements about his proficiency. However, I note in passing that Rickards includes a quote from John Hunt's journal where Hunt says that [Cargill] "translated carelessly and used a kind of Anglo-Fijian idiom!", *In Their Own Tongues*...208. That is a revealing statement and one that I unfortunately overlooked when conducting my own research on the Hunt manuscripts.

[11] Hunt to Lyth, 3 July 1846, FM4/1421, ML., cited in *Inheritance of Hope*...357.

[12] Calvert to Wesleyan Secretaries, July 1846, FM4/1421, ML., cited in *Inheritance of Hope*...358.

[13] Hunt to Secs, 4 Oct. 1846, FM4/3044, ML.,cited in *Inheritance of Hope*...421.

[14] Lyth, Daybook, 17 July 1847, B568 ML.

[15] John Watsford, *Glorious Gospel Triumphs as seen in My Life and Work in Fiji and Australasia,* London, Charles Kelly, 1900, 61-2, cited in *Inheritance of Hope*...429.

[16] Calvert to Hunt, 12 July 1846 and 9 Aug 1847, FM4/1428, ML; Calvert to Williams, 23 July 1847, Calvert Papers, South Seas Biographical Box 35, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Collection, School of Oriental and African Studies, London., cited in *Inheritance of Hope* ...429-33.

[17] Thomas Williams, 'A Short Account of the Translation of the Bible', B 461, ML, cited in *Inheritance of Hope*...430.

[18] Lyth to his Mother, 26 Aug. 1847, Copy of letter sent to author by Lyth descendant, Keith Crawford, cited in *Inheritance of Hope*...430.

[19] David Hazlewood, Diary, 10 Aug. – 23 Sept. 1847, MSS 5895, ML; Hazlewood to Lyth, 27 Jan. 1852, FM4/1432, Hazlewood to Wesleyan Secretaries, 6 July 1849, FM4/1432, all references cited *in Inheritance of Hope*...430-1. Hazlewood's own publication was *A Fijian and English and an English and Fijian Dictionary... brief hints on Native Customs, Proverbs, The Native Names of Natural Productions and Notices of the Islands of Fiji, and a Grammar of the Language with examples of Native Idioms*...ed. James Calvert, London, 1872. Hazlewood's Old Testament manuscript translation provided the foundation for the publication of the first Bible Society edition of the Fijian Bible (OT section) in 1864. The Old Testament section was bound together with Calvert's 1858 revision of Hunt's New Testament, see below.

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[20] *In Their Native Tongue*...220. Calvert, *Fiji and the Fijians, Vol 2: Mission History*, London, 1858, 228; Watsford, *Glorious Gospel Triumphs*...103, cited *in Inheritance of Hope*...447 and *Exodus of the I Taukei*...193.

[21]William Moore (a missionary in Fiji since 1850), quoted in John Malvern to Wesleyan Secretaries, 15 Feb. 1861, FM4/1421, ML., cited in *Exodus of the I Taukei*...193.

[22]Berthold Seeman, *An Account of a Government Mission to the Fiji Islands,* London, Dawsons, 1973[Reprint: first published 1862], 25. The Viwa edition refers to either the 1847 original or the 1853 corrected, which included Hunt's own corrections and the 'many alterations and corrections'earlier referred to by Watsford; both these books were printed and published on Viwa. Calvert reserved his major amendments for the 1858 London edition. As an example of the extent of Calvert's amendments in this 1858 edition, we need only look at the first chapter of the Book of Luke, comparing the 1847 translation, that of John Hunt, against the 1858 rendition. There are 80 verses in Chapter One of Luke. In 74 of the verses, the 1858 Calvert Revision makes changes from Hunt's 1847 version. Some changes appear minor but others are quite major, including word order and many vocabulary changes. Altogether the changes seem to make a significant difference to the whole chapter. As a matter of further interest, when we turn to the next revision of the Fijian New Testament, which was done by the Fiji Bible Society in 1977, of the 80 verses in that same chapter, the 1977 Bible Society Revision makes only minor changes in 2 verses, when compared with the 1858 version. So, virtually, the 1858 revision is replicated in the 1977 revision. It may well be suggested that James Calvert's Revision of the New Testament (1858) has become the standard New Testament used in Fiji churches today.

[23] Paul Geraghty, 'The IVolavosa and the Codification of Fijian', in *Directions: Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol 27, No 1 June 2005, 78-9.

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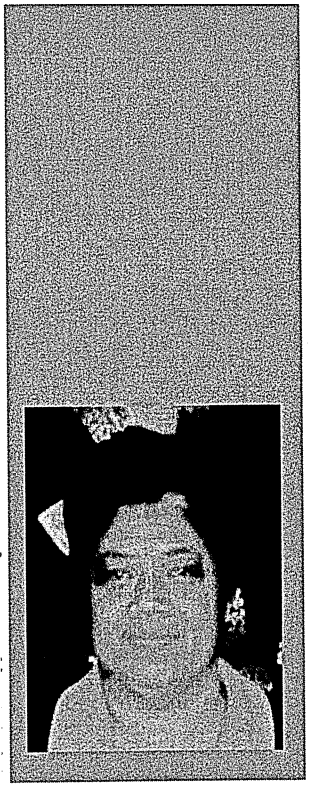

Asinate F. Samate

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Re-imagining the Claim that God and Tonga are my Inheritance

The coat of arms of Tonga proudly bears the motto, *Ko e 'Otua mo Tonga ko hoku tofi'a* (God and Tonga are my inheritance). Taking this as my topic, I would like to approach the motto from a grass-roots perspective. By this I mean that I will try – though the task be difficult – to appreciate and understand the realities of those for whom simply meeting their basic human needs is a daily struggle, and at the same time to represent those who are very concerned with the current situation and the future of Tonga, in all aspects.

I hope to leave some fresh insights for all of us to think about, and to go back and follow up, so that together, we will make Tonga, the kind of place King Siaosi Tupou I (King George Tupou I) envisioned it to be when he vouchsafed it to God in 1839, quoting the Prophet Hosea: 'My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge'; or 'Without vision, my people perish' (4:6a). His desire was that Tonga should be the kind of

place Prophet Amos desired, where 'justice roll on like a river' and 'righteousness like a never-failing stream' (5:24); Tongans, the kind of people whom Prophet Micah requires '[t]o act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God' (6: 8e).[1]

To present my ideas about 're-imagining the motto of the country, God and Tonga are my inheritance', I employ these sub-topics:

- A traditional analogy – 'The unity of the double strand or double layer'
- The origin of the motto, 'God and Tonga are my inheritance'
  a) Why 'God'?
     i) the traditional Tongan concept of god
     ii) the influence of the missionaries and the King of Tonga
     iii) Church and State (responsibility and authority)
     iv) the personal conviction of King Tupou I
  b) What does 'Tonga' stand for?
     i) the people
     ii) the culture
     iii) the land
- The meaning of 'inheritance'
- Conclusion: How, in the light of this motto, do we re-imagine the future of Tonga?

A traditional analogy – 'The unity of the double strand or double layer'

My starting point is an attempt to explain a traditional analogy that for me is the best demonstration of the essential structure of Tongan thought processes. In an effort to create a balance between God and Tonga, I use the traditional analogy to demonstrate how, in the thinking of Tongans, the two always go together to complement, not to contradict, each other. I call this analogical framework the *unity of the double strand or double layer*: in it, the individual and the community, the past and the

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future, the church and state, *lotu* and *ako*, or whatever pairs you bring forward, are best regarded as two sides of the same coin.

This can be demonstrated by examples from the production of *koloa faka-Tonga* (Tongan riches, wealth) – the artistic skills of weaving mats *(fala)* and making tapa cloth *(ngatu)* – the pride of Tongan women. The double strand refers to *au* in *lalanga* (mat-weaving), the double layer to *lau* in *ngatu* (tapa-making). As Adrienne Kaeppler rightly said, 'Bark cloth and mats were the highest ranking objects and were categorized as "*koloa*" (valuables) and made by women' and 'the creation and presentation of valuables are important processes and products that are embedded in Tongan conceptualization about the reproduction of society and culture' (1996: 59).

In weaving, the value, strength, rank and duration of mats are mainly created by the way they are woven. For example, the 'double-stranded' mats as in *fala* are superior to the single-stranded as in *lotaha* and *papa*. The former are used for presentation in traditional ceremonies *(katoanga)* such as weddings, birthdays and funerals, while the latter are mainly for casual and everyday use.

One particular type of mat – *fala paongo*, the most chiefly *(fala'eiki)* especially if it is without a coloured wool trimming *(kulasi)* – is appropriate for presentation to nobles or royalty (James, 1988: 7). It is double-stranded (like all other mats) and is made of *paongo* (a type of pandanus leaf). These are regarded as the most delicate and the most difficult to prepare and weave, because after cutting *paongo* leaves, you cannot leave them too long; you have to store them in a cool place or in the shade, until they turn from gold to russet. When the leaves are ready, women weave them only when the air is moist (as in the early morning, at night or when it is raining).

It is also noteworthy (in the light of the double-stranded unity) that when a *paongo* leaf is halved, the halves have distinct characteristics – one half is soft and the other is tough. The soft part is slit and used to weave the *fala paongo*; the tough side is used to weave *papa*. Once

more, the idea of double-stranded unity is observed. No wonder *fala paongo* is the most chiefly mat!

Similarly with *ngatu* or tapa-making, there has to be a double layer in its making: the *lau lalo* (the under layer) is placed lengthwise on the *papa koka'anga* (the bench used when sticking and printing tapa) and the *lau 'olunga* (top layer) is stretched crosswise, pulled, straightened and glued onto the *lau lalo* while the *kupesi* (raised motif on a board) is imprinted on it with dye.[2] The concept of *pikitai* comes from this strong, permanent bonding or holding together between the two layers, which lasts and is very difficult to tear apart. That's where the idea of *tui pikitai* comes from – a clinging faith, a gripping faith, grasping and holding on tightly, never letting go.

Another demonstration of the idea of double-stranded unity is seen when the *koloa faka-Tonga* are presented: one type of valuable is not presented on its own without the other. A *kie Tonga,* for example, cannot be presented without *ngatu*, and similarly, *fala* has to be presented with *ngatu* (known as *fala 'aofi*). Presenting one without the other is incomplete and inadequate, in the traditional Tongan sense.

I turn now to consider what this has to do with Tongan thought processes. A colleague of mine from Tonga, Mele'ana Puloka, is currently working on her PhD thesis at Oxford University in England.[3] I wish to explain what I understand of some of her developing ideas. She makes two claims: first, that God is central to the thinking of Tongans; and secondly, that the traditional Tongan way of thinking (especially among those born and raised in Tonga) may best be described as spiral, as distinct from the more linear and logical thinking of the scientific method as enhanced by academic education and modern science and technology. She argues that the unity of Tongan 'spiral thinking' and the 'centrality of God in the thinking of Tongans' are double strands and layers, which do go together. Her current data seem to support these claims, though she has yet to complete her research.

The kind of thinking termed spiral thinking has *authority* in the centre of the loop. This authority can be God, your auntie, your teacher, *faifekau*

(clergyman), parents, wife. Always held in the centre by this authority, there radiate networks of human relationships in the context of social and cultural systems of understanding. Tongan logic starts with *who*, not with *what* (or reasons *why*). Puloka claims that such a process is a free (i.e. unrestrained) process of thinking, involving ideas, thoughts, metaphors and other imagery. Tongan thinking can be seen as naturally expressed in modes of poems, proverbs, songs and fables, in which the content is to be heard rather than read, to be interpreted rather than taken in the literal meaning. Linear thinkers are more prone to label this kind of thinking as scatter-headed thinking and it is true that the message may become different, even corrupted, by the time it arrives at the last loop of the spi ral; yet the alteration itself is a part of the process.

However, Puloka also suggests that Tongan thinking can *combine* linear and spiral by what she calls the transcopic lens (a term she coined) to view the physical and the non-physical, or to combine the mind and the heart in learning and searching for the Truth (which she – and we, as Tongans – believe is what education is all about). But there you are – 'Tongan spiral thinking'! Who knows, this particular research may influence and shape a distinctive Tongan-based curriculum and a system of education that better suits the Tongans and the Pacific as well, perhaps, as the peoples of other non-western societies.

This distinction might help to explain the cultural differences and misunderstanding between Tongans and *palangi* (white people). While studying overseas, numbers of Tongan students have gone through a lot of conflict, mainly because there is no authority to fall back on. At the same time, the *palangi* also have difficulty in understanding the Tongan way of going about things, and too few try to understand the rationale of the Tongan culture or, for that matter, to learn the language, which would be a medium to tell them a lot about Tonga and its culture. However, this can be seen as culture shock experienced both ways. Again, what is being addressed here is the unity of the two strands, of spiral and linear thinking, as well as spiral thinking and the centrality of God (as the two main strands in Puloka's research).

In my own current doctoral research, I am also experiencing the double-stranded unity in the balancing process of trying to tease out what is and is not empowering, for Tongan women, in our culture (in both the prehistoric/pre-Christian era and the contemporary one) as well as in the western cultural influences.

Therefore, in essence, the traditional imagery of the double-stranded *au* of a fine Tongan mat, and the criss-cross direction of the *ngatu* – which constitute the two most important equivalents of jewellery or dowry (*koloa*) for Tongan women – can be used here, in this particular context, to symbolise the foundation of the Tongan traditional way of life and thinking – in which God and Tonga, or *lotu* and *ako* (the spiritual and the intellectual, or faith and knowledge), or *siasi* and *pule'anga* (church and state) exist side by side; one is there to strengthen the other because without the other, their existence does not have much meaning, value or worth, in the traditional sense and context.

As a matter of fact, this is the kind of understanding, of belief and of mentality that the Tongan people (in Tonga perhaps) were brought up with, and that has become the core of their inner being and the source of their inner strength. For those who were born and bred in Tonga (especially), no matter where they go and how long they are away from the land of their birth, this 'spiritual tie' is very difficult to part with because it has become very much a part of their life. No wonder some of the Tongans who reside overseas, as they age, they always want to go back home to die (*'Auto 'a e manu ki toku*); and some have a constant desire to go back now and then, to their roots, for re-routing and re-claiming their past and their heritage. No matter where they are, they will always remain Tongan in their heart of hearts, in their minds, their spirit and the core of their beings, even to their last breath.

The origin of our motto

When I was trying to think about and re-imagine the motto of the country, I could not help but wonder why King Siaosi Tupou I did not

decide on other watchwords such as: Wealth and Prosperity are my inheritance; or Knowledge and Power; or Land, Sea and People, or any other. I also wondered why he used '*my* inheritance' instead of '*our* inheritance', to be more inclusive, as in the motto of the United States of America: 'In God *we* trust' (and not In God *I* trust). The meaning and use of 'inheritance' was also a cause of interest.

Why 'God'?
It is quite clear that in the motto, King Tupou I was referring to the Christian God, the God brought by the missionaries as the deity of the new religion, which they introduced to Tonga in the early nineteenth century.

Traditional concept of 'gods' and the divine origin of the kings and queens. The concept of a god or a supernatural being was not foreign to the Tongan people. Their ancestors worshipped their traditional gods such as *Tangaloa* in the sky, *Maui* in the underworld and *Hikule'o* in *Pulotu.* There were other gods, of sharks, stones, rocks, wood, lizards, winds, ocean, the harvest and so on. Religious activities such as priestly functions, sacrifices and prayers were already practised. Tongans believed that on earth, the king was the supreme representative and direct descendent of gods and his authority was divine. They also believed that all chiefs were immortal and had souls while commoners did not. This belief in their divine origin explains why the kings and chiefs had so much authority, respect and influence (Wood, 1943: 3, 4). Even, for some Tongans, the worm that was portioned into three, namely *Kohai, Koau* and i Momo,[4] was believed to be the equivalent of the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

Tongan myths and legends contained creation stories, such as the stories of the first Tu'i Tonga, 'Aho'eitu, son of an earthly mother and a divine father; of Maui's fish-hook fishing up the islands of Tonga; of how earthquakes occurred, as in Tamasia and Malofafa; of Hina and the origin of the coconut tree, based on love; of the origin of *kava* and sugarcane *(tô)* which embodies responsibility and sacrifice; and so many other stories.

The influence of missionaries and King Siaosi Tupou I. When the missionaries from the London Missionary Society came to Tonga in 1797 and the Wesleyan missionaries in the 1820s, the country was in a state of turmoil, strife and civil wars between rival chieftains who fought over power, titles and territories. In the midst of this, missionaries were received with hostility and unwelcoming brutality, mainly from the chiefs, who still wanted to keep the common people enslaved and regard them as their property. In their struggle, some missionaries were killed and some escaped; those who stayed and survived were fearless in their courage and determination to stay on in order to fulfill their original purpose in going to Tonga – to plant their own faith as the new faith in the Tongan soil.

To us, Tongans, their ulterior motive was to convert the natives from barbaric acts and normal dispositions such as cannibalism, enslavement, human sacrifice, greed, revenge and brutality; and to cultivate more civilised and Christian ways such as humility, compassion, respect, generosity, and so on. How different from Africa, where the Three Gs as the Africans called it – God, Gold and Glory – were the main watchwords of the colonisers. But for missionaries in Tonga – God, yes! Gold, no (only coconuts)! And glory? For their glory or God's glory? Maybe the latter fits more with their stories than the former!

In fact, one of the things from the missionaries for which most Tongans are profoundly grateful is the introduction, quite early in the nineteenth Century, to western thinking and schooling. Consequently, Tonga was ahead of its Pacific neighbours and many other traditional societies, in its exposure to the outside world and subsequent adoption of the enlightening processes of the mind and spirit, making them their own.

In the political sense, the missionaries assisted the King in establishing a secured model of government and drawing up a constitution and code of laws that greatly contributed to preserving Tonga's independence as a nation (although it did become a British Protectorate in 1900) while the rest of its Pacific neighbours had to seek or accept alliances with powerful colonial superpowers for security's sake. The wisdom and

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forward-looking propensity of Tupou I and the missionaries prevented the kingdom from being formally and politically colonised. This makes a lot of difference to us Tongans and underlies our somewhat positive and friendly attitude towards the missionaries and even to foreigners.

I understand that in many traditional societies where the missionaries managed to civilise and christianise, many 'modern' citizens tend to have a very negative and condescending view of missionaries, mainly because a later age blames them and chastises them for destroying the traditional cultures and imposing their God, together with their systems and ways of life, on the natives.

This evaluation may be true of some situations, but ,we, Tongans tend to have a positive view of, and owe a lot to, those missionaries, for the good things they did. Together with King Siaosi Tupou I, these bearers of the Good News helped to shape our society and protect it from foreign rule, although Wood was right in saying that King Tupou I 'was the one mainly responsible for the successful accomplishment of that transition' from 'heathenism and disorder to its modern settled and peaceful state' (1943: 43). This is not to deny that there is also a need for more positive changes from the colonial mentality and the 'missionary attitude' of white supremacy into more of an exchange and partnership (like partners in mission) – the frame of mind that is now, increasingly, being promoted.

Nevertheless, we can see again that the 'balancing process of the double-stranded unity' was at work when the King and the missionaries worked side by side (especially after his conversion) for the good of Tonga. It is no wonder the epithets 'The Grand Old Man of the Pacific' and 'The Maker of Modern Tonga' have so frequently been applied to him.

Church and State — responsibility and authority. Essentially, Tongans see the church and state as one and inseparable, where one infuses or overshadows the other, and I would tend to think Tupou I had intended this to be so when he created the motto for the country. The seal of

the Government, or the coat-of-arms, also reflects that – the crown and 3 swords refer to the kingship (political); the dove and olive leaves are symbols of peace (spiritual). The flag – with the cross, the white and red colours – designates religious symbolism. The National Anthem is a hymn, upholding the king and the country unto God (religious).

In fact, the two cannot be separated, as is also the case with a double-stranded or double-layered mat and tapa-cloth, as we have seen. A Tongan hymn says exactly that: *Lau pe he palofisai, Toki 'olive 'e ua; Pule'anga mo e Siasi, Kae malohi ha fonua* (That the two olive leaves – church and state, together, are the strength of a nation) (*Ko e Tohi Himi* . . ., 391: 5). I understand that having dominant Christian symbols and motifs in national and public arenas has caused conflicts and disarray in many multi-faith societies and non-religious situations, which Tonga may have to face in the near future, but as it is now, the church is still very much central to Tongan community life.

As with the church, the issue to deal with here is to see if the church is performing its prophetic role, since it is seen as the representative and mouthpiece of God in the world. The concept of authority is relevant here, for both the church and government, since authority is God-given and yet tends to be vulnerable. It is meant to be properly exercised, with integrity and humility, with good governance and transparency. If authority is being abused and misused, then corruption and 'dominance through the back door' often result.

As far as the Tongan political system is concerned, there is more and more demand for political change. When, in researching for my PhD in Education in the early 1990s, I interviewed about 70 people from all levels (community, bureaucratic and executive) about the kind of democratic changes they wanted for Tonga, I found that their responses ranged widely, from 'No change at all' (happy with the current system) to 'A complete change' (a government to be fully elected by the people). Maybe if I were to go back now (more than 10 years later) and ask them the same questions, I suppose their responses might be different, maybe more skewed to one side.

But political duties of responsibility, accountability and integrity of authority are critical to good governance. As a result of surveys of people in Tonga, Morton suggests, 'there is a desire for a return to an idealized former state in which those with rank and power were honest and served the people's best interests', noting that one man in Tonga who was interviewed referred to '*havala* (greed) as the *mahaki fo'ou* (new sickness). He observed that *havala* is particularly dangerous when it afflicts those with political power' (1996: 255). Indeed it is, regardless of whatever institution or authority executed.

We, as leaders, are also warned by Lord Acton of the need for proper handling and responsible execution of power, because of its natural tendency to be corruptive. He warned: 'Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. George Orwell, in his short novel, *Animal Farm*, now familiar to generations of students, reminds us of the same thing.

In the Bible, there are many warnings for kings and rulers against misuse and abuse of power.[5] At the same time we see in Jesus the perfect example of a good leader, expressed in the image of a Good Shepherd. At the time and in the culture of which Jesus spoke, his audience understood that a shepherd does not go in front and lead the sheep by the nose. But he is behind them, making sure they are safe and sound, that they are warm and well-fed. If any of them falls, is injured or gets sick, he brings them to his bosom and tends them, and he makes sure he takes them to a peaceful place with clean, flowing water to drink and green, lush pastures to graze.

After his conversion, when using his authority to make life-changing decisions to serve and save his subjects, King Tupou I did exactly that. For example, he claimed that the commoners also had souls; he proclaimed that all, both chiefs and commoners, were equal under the law; he emancipated the people from the powers of chiefs; and he ordered the chiefs to make land available to their people (Wood, 1943: 3, 48, 56–7). Isn't that good shepherding?

Perhaps that explains why King Siaosi Tupou I said 'my inheritance' – for the change to start with him before it could become a common good. Again, a balance is struck between the personal and the community, as one strengthens the other. Again, the unity of the double strand is at work here. In leadership, a personal or private good can very well be shared and made a public good, either for the benefit (or even for the detriment) of the collective good. It is a Christian characteristic to be generous and share some life-changing experiences for the sake of others, rather than to be selfish and self-indulgent.

King Tupou I did this by putting his people, land and all under the protection of the Living God – the best investment he could ever have made for Tonga. Therefore, the relevance of God and Tonga, as a peaceful country under God's protection, tells us that religion is not just an ideology but a reality. That may be why the King made a public declaration in 1839, dedicating his nation to God by scooping a handful of Tonga's soil, holding it up and vouchsafing to God the care of his people, the land, the sea and everything that belongs in them. Tongan superstition claims that a very serious curse will fall on the miscreant and his family if someone cheats or abuses the rightful ownership of land. This indicates how serious, sacred and spiritual a commitment Tongans consider the dedication of the land to God to have been.

Jesus came to serve; never to be served. He washed his disciples' feet at the Passover, not to reinforce servitude and slavery, but to be interpreted as a living example – to show us that if we are not in touch with the reality of where people are, then there is no way we can reach them. As a form of teaching, Jesus used stories, precept and parables as a vibrant form of dialoguing, not just expositions of arid principles. People were at the centre of his ministry. He never thought of himself, but only of others. He died so that we live. That is real authority and un-corruptive power. He turned power upside down and inside out by serving and saving others, not himself.

King Tupou I's personal conviction. It is in fact a matter of pride for us that our ancestors did not accept blindly, nor were they forced to accept

the new religion against their will. Of course, at first they resisted and fought against the pursuers of the new religion. But both by their clever strategies and by their claim of the power of their God, the missionaries managed to convert the most powerful and influential person in Tonga, Tâufa'âhau (later King Siaosi Tupou I). No doubt the timing was right too, because the new King had just defeated all other rival chiefs and united the whole island kingdom under his sole authority. Little wonder that the missionaries, seeing how the common people respected, adored, and treated their king and chiefs like gods, understood that if the King were to be converted, the whole island kingdom would automatically become Christians, if in name only.

The King, of his own free will and personal conviction, tested the new God using the most dangerous and life-threatening ordeals.[66] Having satisfied himself in this way, the King used his personal conviction of the power, truth and reality of the Christian God to change the course of history of the whole kingdom, starting from himself. One expression of his conversion was the change of name from Tâufa'âhau to Siaosi, after King George III of England; and his wife, Lupepau'u, was given the name Sâlote, after Queen Charlotte of England. Changing one's name is not an easy or simple thing to do; it shows real commitment to and conviction of some life-changing experience. In the biblical sense, it is often to do with a significant change of life, from old to new, from death to life, as in the stories of Abraham and Sarah (from Abram and Sarai), and of Jacob (changing into Israel), and of Paul (changing from Saul).

It is important to note that before the missionaries came, King Tupou I, the 'master weaver' or the 'maker of modern Tonga' did not want to spread out the Tongan mat (*fala*) in order to embrace the new religion (*Fofola e fala kae fai e alea*). But after his conversion, he let the Tongan mat out into the open in order to negotiate, to discuss, to plan and to design the new structure of the Tongan *fale* (house) and to let the young sea eagle learn to fly and to spread its wings wider over the ocean, to soar far, high and wide onto the far-out lands in order to gather for the young ones at home. As Tongans, we definitely owe a lot to the

missionaries and to King Tupou I, whose blood, toils and far-sightedness for Tonga have nourished the young coconut tree (the new faith and the Tongan church) to grow; and now it has matured, it has become the most useful source of life 'inherited' by Tongans for Tonga and for the Pacific.

What does 'Tonga' stand for?
The idea of Tonga embraces several elements, but for the purposes of this paper, I emphasise three: the people; the culture and the land.

The people. The people are Tonga's main resource because, unlike many other countries, Tonga lacks natural resources such as oil, gold, iron ore, copper, phosphate or the like, which have brought other countries wealth and prosperity.

In the last Census, in 1996, Tonga had a total population of 97,784 and an average annual population growth rate of 0.3% over a ten-year period (Statistics Department, 1996). There are rough estimates that in addition, more than half of that number (that is, about 50,000 or even more) have migrated or live overseas, with their growing families. There is also a high rate of internal migration from the smaller to the bigger islands, and urbanisation from the rural to the urban centres, particularly Nuku'alofa and its hinterland.

Such population movements raise urgent social and economic questions. What are the implications of this internal migration for the water supply, housing, electricity, sanitation, schooling, jobs, road traffic, crime, health services, the environment – to name a few? And what implications does migration overseas have for the culture, religion, political beliefs, economic life, socialisation and quality of life of the Tongan diaspora?

In considering these questions, there are three main issues I would like to address:

a) Remittances. The then Minister of Finance announced in the Tonga Legislative Assembly meeting of 14 June 2005 that 'Tonga's best export

was its people, who brought into the country $184m annually. He also said that there was concern that New Zealand, Australia and the USA could send back illegal over-stayers' (*Matangi Tonga Online*, Tonga News: on Parliament, 20 June 2005).

I can only hope that we are not reduced to viewing our people as goods and commodities to be exported! However, the minister's statement does tell us that our economy is built on very shaky and unsteady ground. Over-dependence on external factors such as remittances, tourism and mono-crop exports (like squash) is very risky. Why not develop and improve locally-based income generating activities such as multi-cropped exports, the fishing industry and local light manufacturing industries?

b) 'Brain-Drain'. The then Minister of Finance also stated in Parliament that 'in the last 5 years, approximately 400 resigned from civil service or government work. This includes more than 70 medical doctors and nurses and more than 40 senior education officials who migrated overseas to live and work. In order to keep them in, he proposed for a budget of T$7.1m to improve salaries' (*Taimi 'o Tonga*, 14 June 2005 - translated from the Tongan).

Tonga is said to have the highest number of PhD graduates per head of population in the Pacific, but many of these people have left the government and the country. Why? We need to think seriously about this question.

But personally, I am most concerned with the claim that 'we educate our people to migrate'. I hope this is not used as an excuse for the problems of low morale, poor working conditions, unsupportive leadership styles and unhealthy attitudes in the workplace towards graduates, especially young graduates returning from overseas educational experience.

c) High youth unemployment rate. In Tonga, the unemployment rate was at least 11.8% in the mid-nineties (FY 93/94) and may very probably be

higher now, especially the rate for youth unemployment. This state of affairs raises questions concerning three areas: does our education system *produce* a high drop-out rate; does the training we give suit the needs of a changing Tongan society; and do the government, the private sector and the community create adequate job opportunities and services for the increasing youth population seeking employment?

There are also warnings here:

- Tonga should be more cautious about the countries and people she is dealing with politically and economically;
- As Tonga becomes more and more modernised and advanced technologically, basic services – water supply, sanitation, gas, electricity, transport, infrastructure, telecommunications, banking, service industries and customer service – need to be more intact and efficient;
- There is a need to set up more effective systems of checks and balances, as well as social assessment or analysis mechanisms to monitor our development in a more holistic and balanced way;

Again, the balancing process of the double-stranded unity is sought here.

The culture. I understand that culture involves many aspects – values, art, craft, dancing, ceremonies, language, way of life and so on. And they are all important. But for the purposes of this paper, I will highlight one or two values as examples.

Tongan culture, customs and tradition – its myths, legends and history dating back to the tenth century (AD 950) and even before that – have much depth, quality and value. Some are unique customary traditions though some also exhibit the relatedness of all Pacific cultures: the traditional *kava ceremony*, the *fahu* system, codes of respect and the different forms of language used for the King, the nobles and the commoners, the *ha'a* or extended family system, the crafts and arts such as *fala, ta'ovala* and *ngatu*-making, different types of traditional poetry, singing and dancing, and so on.

Tonga is small and relatively unknown to the rest of the world, but its people's pride in their roots and culture is unsurpassed. This is one of the reasons why I think young Tongans born and raised overseas would benefit from being exposed to Tongan culture and traditions, in order to minimise the negative effects of an identity crisis later. I believe they need to develop some sense of their Tonganness or Tongan identity – learning, for example, to speak the Tongan language, to understand the protocol, the culture, their history, their roots – early in life. By doing this, they may take pride in their culture and may take the best, rather than the worst, of both worlds.

The New Zealand Model is trying to do just that. Tongan educators work together with the NZ Ministry of Education to include the Tongan Language and Culture Studies syllabus in the school curriculum, from preschool to primary to high school to polytechnic institutes and university.

I also see and understand that it is a general world trend for people to become more secular and materialistic in their outlook, and that money and a western-style economy has become the driving force behind a lot of things in life. But I believe that our Tongan women (in Tonga and especially overseas) need to be reminded that it is very important to try to maintain the basic core values and spiritual significance of our *katoanga*, especially in the presentation of *koloa faka-Tonga,* although forms of practising it may change somewhat, to suit the time.

Of course, culture is never static; it is constantly changing. But as Morton rightly observes, the 'concept of *anga faka-Tonga* is undergoing constant reconfiguration, as it always has' and therefore, it 'could accommodate considerable socio-political change while retaining its profound symbolic significance', as well as needing a re-interpretation of values (1996: 264). She also quotes Eric Shumway (a Mormon with a long association with Tonga), who says:

Many Tongan customs are eroding under the abrasion of modern technology and modern thought. Many cultural fixtures will inevitably become relics of the past . . . we must preserve also the classic Tongan virtues which have traditionally characterized the ideal nature every Tongan (indeed every person everywhere) should aspire to: anga 'ofa (a loving nature), anga faka'apa'apa (a respectful reverent disposition), mamahi'i me'a (zealousness in a good cause to the point of pain), tauhi vaha'a (maintaining good relations, being eager to mend fences) and lototô (being humbly willing, deferential but keenly committed). (quoted in Morton, 1996: 256)

One of the core values that Tongans highly regard is humility (*angafakatôkilalo*). I know many people do not like it, asserting that it looks like a sign of weakness or passive acceptance of some top-down decision. Nevertheless, I think *humility* ranks high in the Tongan traditional set of values. A paramount example of an act of humility occurred in England at the Coronation in 1953 when the queen of Tonga, Queen Sâlote Tupou III, placed Tonga in the eye of the world, willingly asking to have her coach uncovered despite the cold rain , mainly to show her utmost respect to the Queen of England, who was her superior in power, status and wealth; and to identify with the common people of England, who also stood there in the rain, to show their respect to their queen.

Humility is also a Biblical value. The downfall of kings and leaders is often associated with pride. The fates of King Nebuchadnezzar and his son, Belshazzar (Daniel 6) and Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26) are examples. St Peter, on the other hand, reminds us all, to 'serve each other in humility (to keep our hearts soft and open to God) for God sets himself against the proud, but he shows favour to the humble' (1 Peter 5:5). In fact, humility in action is an example of power turned upside down, as Jesus demonstrated in and by his earthly life!

However, we are reminded here that balancing culture and religion, the past and the future, shows us that the unity of the double strand is an

ongoing process. Our past (which has to do with our traditional culture) is to be treasured, as long as it does not imprison us. It should inform the present and positively shape the future.

We are all reminded here of Prophet Hosea, 'Without vision, my people perish' (4:6a). The double strand of the past and the future is united here, in the present, surrounded by reminders of the best of our past as cultural and Christian values reinforce each other. Together, they will be like a spear in the hands of a warrior, or a paddle in the hands of a rower – always forward-looking and moving forward.

The land. Tonga, with a land area of 269 square miles (or 718 sq km) is made up of some 150 islands of which only about 36 are inhabited. There is certainly more sea than land: about 700,000 sq km of it, in fact. Nevertheless, the land is seen as the 'inheritance' of Tongans. Perhaps that was why King Tupou I and the missionaries introduced the legislation forbidding the sale of land to foreigners, so that Tongans will not lose their 'inheritance'.

I have already mentioned the Tongan superstition about the person who cheats or abuses rightful ownership of land, noting that true or not, that idea shows how serious, sacred and spiritual was King Tupou I's dedication of the land to God. However, there are certain important issues regarding land that create great problems in the context of present realities, and that as Christian inheritors of Tupou I's legacy, we need to address.

a) The land tenure system. In Tonga, what some have (erroneously) described as an almost feudal type of land tenure system still prevails. A proportion of absentee landlords, because they are overseas or for some other reason, have left their land unused and or under-utilised, while many Tongan males have no access to the allotment of land to which they are constitutionally entitled; or, not being entitled to a piece of land, have no access to land to settle and farm. Although people can lease or 'buy' and register land, still the question remains: How can

we make unused land more accessible to those who need it most? Or how can landless people have access to land?

b) Land ownership for women. In Tonga, land rights are vested in men. Women have some access to or use rights in land only in their roles as sisters, wives and widows. [I found the story of the daughters of Zelophehad, as used by the World Day of Prayer in 2004 somewhat encouraging. The daughters managed to talk their father into giving them land (as in Numbers 27:1–7 and 36:1–12), but according to Hester (1968), the Jewish laws of inheritance mean that it is the tradition that as females, they were only given land on the condition that they marry within the tribe. By marriage, their land would pass into the possession of their husbands. So in order to keep the land within the tribe, their husbands had to be members of their own tribe. They could not take their inheritance away from the inheritance of the larger group (Numbers 36).

The issue of inheritance through sons, not daughters, still stands, where a woman could inherit land only if she were the sole descendant of her father. For if there is no son but only daughters, the inheritance, under Jewish law, will go to the father's next brother and so on. Similarly, a mother never inherited the goods of her deceased children, and a daughter never inherited if there were no sons. Every man had to keep the inheritance of his father (Hester, 1968:11).]
In Tonga, the law allows women to lease land and a woman can have the right of ownership to her father's land as long as she stays unmarried, does not commit adultery and has no illegitimate children. In other words, women's access to land is still in the context of males – that is, ownership through father, son or husband, and she cannot pass these rights to anyone else.

In 2004, I interviewed about 30 leading women in Tonga on their views of women's land ownership rights. Their responses varied from 'yes, change' to 'no change'. However, there were some cases of women who were very concerned that they were driven out or could not own their fathers' inherited land because of the law. Some of the interviewees

expressed anger, bitterness and great disappointment because of this. It is a depressing state of affairs because there are serious cases of needy women whose situations are desperate and urgent but who are disadvantaged and disqualified by the current land laws.

c) Drainage and swampy areas. One of the problems affecting the health and living conditions of many Tongans is poor drainage, especially in low-lying and swampy areas. They have become breeding places for mosquitoes, which often cause dengue fever epidemics. In addition, stray and loose animals pollute these areas, and the sewerage system is greatly affected. What can be done to alleviate poor drainage?

d) Removal of sand, gravel and rocks. Tonga, discounting its EEZ, is not a very big country, but the increased demand for construction of roads, wharfs, foreshore, houses and so on means removal of sand from some beaches, and gravel and rocks from some quarries. I am very concerned that this might affect the foundation of the islands due to increased erosion and depletion of those natural materials. How much more do we have to extract before erosion becomes a tragedy?

So, what should we do about these issues? What about the greenhouse effect and global warming? What can we do about these ongoing problems? Organise a *uike lotu* (a week of prayer)? Will that be sufficient? And how can we balance all these problems and solutions so that Tonga will remain Tonga? Global threats, modernisation and the pressure towards globalisation are already major among the forces encroaching on our culture and way of life, yet we give little attention to stewardship of our inheritance.

The importance of 'inheritance'

King Tupou I adopted the concept of an inheritance from the Hebraic tradition, in its valuing of three things: inheriting in the male line, the preservation of the family unit and above all, keeping the covenant between God and the Israelites. The exception to this was the Levites,

whose specific inheritance was to become a royal priesthood to offer sacrifices and worship to Yahweh.

In the Old Testament, the inheritance was taken to mean the land of Canaan but it also included the collective lands and the peoples of the tribes of Israel. They were given the Promised Land, not because they deserved it but because it was a gift of grace from God (the Father) to Israel (his son) – as a son inherits the father's property.

In the New Testament, the New Israel comprises the people of faith (rather than the descendants of Abraham) and they are the ones who inherit the Kingdom of God, where God alone reigns. The people of faith are the 'chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God' (1 Peter 2:9). In Christ, the people of faith have become a New Creation, which is their inheritance, forming a New Family of God in Christ.

As for Tonga, the inheritance *(tofi'a)* that King Tupou I dedicated to the Christian God (and not to idol worship, be it traditional or modern) refers to all the lands, people and sea and everything in it. In another sense, the meaning of *tofi'a* also encompasses children, entrusted to the care of the extended family. It also refers to the noble estates *(tofi'a)*: each noble is responsible for and expected to take care of both the land and the people constituting his inheritance. How they undertake those responsibilities nowadays has become another matter of concern. I understand that the land inherited by Israel is a different place altogether today from what it was then, but the message still stands – that symbolically, Israel was only a prototype of God's love, grace and faithfulness to us, his people, since God was the sole owner, the giver and the sole possessor of its land and people.

God has a responsibility to us and so do we to God, to each other and to the environment. This is the unity of the double strand and layer at work in the land and people of Tonga, since both the land and the people are 'our inheritance'.

Conclusion – How are we to re-imagine the future of Tonga in light of the motto, 'God and Tonga are my inheritance'?

The re-dedication of Tonga to God (a ceremony known as *Tukufonua ki Langi*) at Pouono, Neiafu, Vava'u in November 1994 was an attempt made by the previous King, Tâufa'âhau Tupou IV, to remind the Government and the people of Tonga of the intention of King Tupou I – to put his people under the most secured place, the protection of the Living God, and not under any worldly power or otherwise.

The call for us today is to reflect upon the meaning of *Tukufonua ki Langi* and how we may translate it into reality, so that it is not just empty words, but living words of life where peace, justice, prosperity and Godly living gush like an overflowing river to fill the land.

The real and lasting wealth of Tonga

We often feel humbled when we compare ourselves to the rest of the world. But this story reminds me of the proverb, 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder'. Or Wealth is in the way you look at it or your attitude towards life.

Here is a story about a rich man who took his son to a poor village to show him how poor some people are. When they returned home, the man asked his son, 'Did you see how poor some people are?'
'Oh, yes!' said the son.
'So what did you learn?' asked the father.
The son answered, 'I saw that we have one dog and they have dogs everywhere. We have a swimming pool and they can play in the ocean. We have beautiful lamps on poles in our garden and they have the stars at night. We have a small piece of land to live on and they can play anywhere in the village. We have paid servants who serve us, but they serve others. We buy our food, but they grow theirs. We have walls around our property to protect us, they have friends to protect them.'
The father was shocked to hear this. Then his son said, 'Thanks, Dad,

for showing me how poor we are!' (*God's Way Everyday*, Friday July 1 2005).

Too many times we forget about what we have, and concentrate on and complain about what we don't have. Whether we are rich or poor depends on how we look at life. We may be poor in material things but rich in things internal and eternal. Tongan people are rich in culture and in spirit. We tend to have some good qualities, such as hospitality, humility, respect, zealousness, love, generosity, living at peace with one another, having a relaxed and 'not to worry' attitude. Why don't we keep or reclaim them?

A Tongan hymn (657) resonates about the wealth of the small and isolated nation of Tonga, wealth that lies in the fertility of the soil for growing food and the rich provisions of the sea – all readily available for the daily nourishment of its people. What about today – Is this still true?
(Mau fakamalo atu ho'o 'omai ha fonua fe'unga mo e kakai; Ma'ungofua he me'a kotoa ke inu pe mo kai. Pea ka hala ia ko hai te ne lau homau koloa 'e ma'u mei tahi na? Our task is to make sure it happens!).

We believe that Tonga has a special role to play on the world scene. The strong foundation has been laid by our ancestors. Our task is to go back to that foundation – and extract what makes Tonga unique; what we can give out to the whole world that no other country can; what is our special call; what are our strengths; what can we do well and how best can we make use of the resources available to us – be they natural, financial, cultural, human or otherwise.

Tonga should learn from the mistakes of other countries and from their own mistakes too. Wise and visionary leadership is desperately needed.

The balancing process goes on for us between science and religion, between history and religion (to bring it closer to us). This reminds me of a critique made by Alistair McGrath (2005). A Professor of Historical

Theology at Oxford University who has now established an institute for inter-faith dialogue, he closely examines the atheistic worldview of Stephen Dawkins, renowned Professor of Physics. McGrath believes that it is important to listen attentively to criticism of religion and respond appropriately; areas of tension must be acknowledged and confronted, and debate between religion and science can be continued graciously and accurately. But as for his personal faith, he states: 'The question of whether there is a God, and what that God might be like has not – despite the predictions of overconfident Darwinians – gone away since Darwin, and remains of major intellectual and personal importance. Some minds on both sides of the argument may be closed; the evidence and debate, however, are not. Scientists and theologians have so much to learn from each other. Listening to each other, we might hear the galaxies sing. Or even the heaven declaring the glory of the Lord (Psalm 19:1)' (McGrath, 2005: 158–9).

That is science and religion. How about history and religion? We are doing just that – in creating the analogy of the unity of the double strand of the Tongan *fala* and *ngatu*, where history creatively makes a critique of religion, and religion creatively responds to history, and by doing that, helps to create and re-create new histories.
The re-imagining of the motto, 'God and Tonga are my Inheritance', means that Tongans should dedicate themselves and their leaders to God every day, by living justly, promoting peaceful living, loving mercy and walking humbly, as it is only by daily striving, individually, in partnership and collectively, that the motto will become their inheritance and not just a thing of the past.

Or as Harvey Cox, Professor of Theology at Divinity School, Harvard University, and his multi-faith class found out in doing the course 'Jesus and Making Moral Choices Today', our imagination needs to be awakened by stories, narratives and parables, and asked, 'What would Jesus do?' and 'how did he respond to the issue in his time?' (Cox, 2004: 26). This can be an answer to the moral dilemmas of today. Together, they proposed three steps to follow in making moral choices:

recognise it as a moral issue; ask what I should do; and summon the courage to do it (ibid.: 25).

Or we can even take a fresh look at the mission of the church and Godly people by asking what God is doing in partnership with us, rather than our trying to do things for God (Puloka, 2005).

It is now more than 160 years since King Tupou I dedicated Tonga to God, and even now the spirit of trusting God and loving Tonga is still with us and will always be with us. Future generations will decide what they do with the double strand of the *fala* and the double layer of the *ngatu* – but I am sure the unity will still be there. The unity of the double strand and double layer; God and Tonga, will always remain inseparable, as Tonga cannot do without God. And God and Tonga will always be the inheritance of Tongan people.

We do hope and pray that the God of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow will bless, guide and secure the Tonga of the Past, Tonga of the Present, and Tonga of the Future. So that together, we will build a strong, firm foundation and a secure inheritance for our children, their children and our grandchildren, where justice overflows and peace avails forever.

Notes

[1] The original version of this paper was delivered as the keynote address at the eleventh conference of the Tonga History Association (now known as the Tonga Research Association) at the Graduate House, University of Melbourne in 2006. In revising, I have made some modifications, to address a more general audience, though sometimes the tone of the initial speech remains.

[2] The raised motif – carved or made of pieces of coconut leaf midrib – is placed under the cloth and the design is transferred by rubbing or dabbing the cloth with a pad soaked in the colouring. It is not unlike the process of coin-rubbing.

[3] My comments here are based on Puloka's notes on Tongan thinking in relation to ontological and epistemological frameworks.
[4] Wood (1943:5) names these three as the first men.
[5] Many aspects of the behaviour of King David, for instance, stand as a cautionary tale for leaders. This was pointed out clearly in a lecture I attended in the summer of 2004 at UCLA Berkeley, given by a prominent Jewish rabbi from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who cited many examples of David's relations with women, including other men's wives, as recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel. Another example is found in the choice made by Pontius Pilate when he confronted Jesus. Knowing what is right yet fearing to lose people's support, he 'washed his hands' of the prisoner before him, rather than holding on to truth (which sets us free). This is a choice that faces all leaders in all times and places: popularity or corruption?
[6] Accessible accounts of some of these 'tests' of God are found in Lâtûkefu (1974:63-5).

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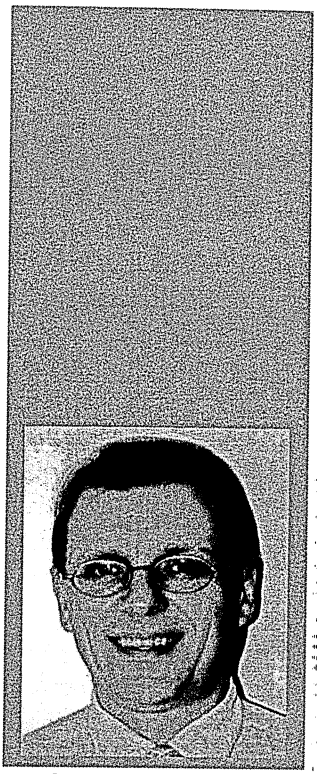
The Church and the Individual
An Interdisciplinary Approach



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Introduction

The early 20s of the 16th century proved to be quite tumultuous for the incipient Reformation and were marked by much confusion and fanaticism. All who joined the movement accepted its fundamental tenets regarding *Sola Scriptura* and the "priesthood of all believers"; however, the early German Reformation was not an organized movement, with clearly defined ways of understanding and interpreting Scripture. Thus, during these years, the leaders of the Reformation were caught on the horns of dilemma: on the one hand, Luther, Melanchthon and others labored to project a public image of their movement as having a sound biblical foundation; on the other hand, they and their followers believed that all people, not just certain individuals, could interpret the Scriptures for themselves, in the light of the Holy Spirit. This resulted, at times, in a variety of bizarre ideas among

some of those who joined the ranks of the Reformation. Understandably, this jeopardized, to some extent, the credibility of the Lutheran movement.[1] This example from early Reformation history illustrates the perennial problem of religious authority in the church.

The dilemma faced by the leaders of the early Lutheran Reformation was not new; the problem of religious authority arose soon after the ascension of Jesus. During their lifetime, the apostles functioned as a trustworthy source of authority for the primitive Christian community. With their death, however, the problem of authority in the church became evident. This problem has never been satisfactorily resolved.

At its best, Christian theology has sought to find a balance between two approaches to religious authority. One approach suggests that the Church has authority over the individual, and that the individual should respond with complete trust toward religious authority and its pronouncements. The other approach suggests that the individual is the source of authority, and that the individual has the right to scrutinize, critique or reject the pronouncements of the Church. In this paper, these approaches to religious authority are referred to, respectively, as dependence and independence models of religious authority.[2]

At the risk of oversimplification, the history of religious authority may be explored from the perspective of these two approaches.[3] This is mainly because the problem of religious authority occurs at the point of interaction between these two mutually exclusive forces: dependence and independence. Throughout the history of Christianity, neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant ecclesiology has been able to break free from the hold of either force, at times oscillating between both or taking them to their extreme. In recent decades, and especially since the Second Vatican Council, the search for a solution to the problem of religious authority, the "holy grail" of ecclesiology, has intensified on both sides of the Christian spectrum. The issue of religious authority is, I believe, also of interest to Christian communities in the Pacific. Let us now, therefore, examine the dependence model, the mode of religious authority prevalent during most of the Christian era.

Dependence

During His earthly ministry, Jesus established a community of believers, known in the New Testament as ekklesia. Following His ascension, it was the task of the apostles, as immediate witnesses to the Christ-event, to faithfully preserve the message, and to function as the doctrinal authority for the primitive ekklesia (Gal. 1:8-12; 2 Thess. 2:15; 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Cor. 10:8). Although the apostles served as itinerant evangelists who established new congregations, there is no New Testament evidence that the apostles ever presided as the heads of local churches. It is clear, however, that they were actively engaged in establishing local leadership, and that this system of governance was based on the approach used in the synagogue.[4] Within the Christian context, these leaders became known as "elders" *(presbyteroi)*, or "bishops" *(episkopoi)*, which basically denoted the same office[5] (Acts 20:17, 28). It appears that the multi-elder system of church governance spread rapidly and became accepted in every Christian congregation during the life of the apostles (Acts 14:23).[6] Although the New Testament emphasizes the need for church leadership to be dependent upon apostolic testimony, it does not present its readers with an unambiguous picture of the nature of episcopal authority. The scarcity of Biblical evidence regarding this matter set the stage for the ecclesiological developments of the post-Apostolic era.

With the rise of various heretical movements, the sub-apostolic Church was, to some extent, forced to address the issue of religious authority. 1 Clement (c. 96 AD) and *Didache* (c. 110 AD), as well as the writings of Ignatius (c. 35 - c. 107 AD), Tertullian (c. 160 – c. 225 AD) and Irenaeus (c. 130 – c. 200 AD), attest that the vacuum left by the death of the apostles was filled by the leaders in local churches, who all appear to have had equal authority. It is in these writings that we witness the evolution of the biblical system of ecclesial leadership into what became known as the episcopal system of church governance.[7] With time, the multi-elder system was replaced by the monepiscopate or monarchical episcopate, i.e., one bishop per church, who, it was believed, was historically linked with the apostles through the rite of ordination. The

role of the bishop was to govern the church, to lead in worship, and to administer the Christian sacraments.[8] Most importantly, however, by virtue of his ordination, which allegedly endowed him with the apostolic gift of interpretation, the bishop was to serve as the protector and interpreter of the Scriptures. It was the role of the bishop to protect the apostolic tradition, as well as individual believers, against heresy, by providing correct interpretation of the Scriptures.[9] This later became known as the doctrine of Apostolic Succession, i.e., the belief that the doctrinal authority given to the apostles by Jesus was preserved in a direct and unbroken line of bishops.[10] This doctrine continues to be the linchpin of contemporary Roman Catholic ecclesiology. By the end of the third century, AD, the bishops, as successors to the apostles, presided over the lives and beliefs of individuals with unique and powerful authority. The salvation of believers depended on their communion with the bishops, through whom, it was believed, God interacted with His people. The presence of a bishop in the church became indispensable to the existence of the community of faith. Where the true bishops were, there was the Church of Christ. Thus, increasingly, the church came to be defined as the bishops, and those in communion with them.[11]

In later centuries, doctrinal authority was centralized in the hands of the Roman bishop, whose official doctrinal pronouncements were identified with the voice of Christ.[12] The height of papal authority occurred in the 13th and 14th centuries, beginning with the reign of Innocent III (1198-1216) and ending with that of Boniface VIII (1294-1303). The Popes of this era claimed authority over both the church and the state. This was clearly expressed in 1302, when, confronted with numerous threats to his authority, Boniface VIII issued a bull, *Unam Sanctam*, in which both the doctrinal and the temporal powers of the bishop of Rome were strongly asserted, and the unity of the Church under the rule of the Roman pontiff was emphasized.[13]

This absolute authority of the community, in the voice of the papacy and the bishops, over the individual, was confirmed by the Council of Trent (1543-1563), and by the First Vatican Council (1869-1870). Both

councils insisted that individual Scriptural interpretation must never contradict official doctrinal teachings of the Church. In communion with the pope, the bishops were the final arbiters of truth. If the Roman Catholic leadership defined a particular teaching or interpretation of Scripture, this was considered truth, even if a more thorough exegesis of the passage was suggestive of an alternate interpretation.[14] This attitude was exemplified in Pius IX's (1792-1878) famous statement: *La tradizione son' io* ("I am the tradition," June 18, 1870).[15]

The Roman Catholic solution to the problem of religious authority, thus, was one of *dependence.* In this model, the leadership of the community was "the church" and they held the key to correct interpretation of Scripture. Individuals were expected to demonstrate complete submission and un-examined trust towards authority. They could contribute to theological thinking, as long as they were in agreement with the leaders of the community. Thus, within this model, doctrinal assent was of primary importance.

The deficiencies of this model were not comprehensively addressed within the Roman Catholic communion until the Second-Vatican Council, when it was suggested that a move away from strict authoritarianism was essential if the Church was to fulfill its missionary mandate.[16] *Gaudium et spes* ("Joy and hope"), a Vatican II document dealing with the Church's relationship with the modern world and promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1965, advocated "lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought," which, in the eyes of some interpreters, allowed a measure of theological pluralism within the Church.[17] Unfortunately, the Second-Vatican Council was just a brief respite in the history of Roman Catholicism. The irresistible lure of the dependence model has been evident in the pontificates of all post-Vatican II pontiffs.[18]

This, however, has not had the desired effect of greater unity and conformity within the church, but has, instead, resulted in fragmentation and division.[19] It should be added that Roman Catholicism is not the only ecclesial community that, deliberately or unthinkingly, has followed the dependence model. It has proven to be irresistible even within

some Orthodox and Protestant communities, with equally damaging consequences.

Independence

In contrast to the dependence model of the first fifteen hundred years of Christian history, the latter Middle Ages were dominated by, what Jaroslav Pelikan terms, "doctrinal pluralism."[20] During the 14th century, the authoritarianism of the Roman Catholic Church was challenged in a number of ways, including growing nationalism and secularism, dissatisfaction with the moral condition of the church and increasing prosperity.[21] Furthermore, the Renaissance and Humanism brought a new emphasis upon the individual, encouraging a return to original sources rather than a dependence on the official pronouncements of the church.[22] This was the milieu within which the Reformation was born and which contributed, in the minds of many, to the upstaging of the mentality of dependence. While Roman Catholicism, at least until the mid-20th century, successfully defended itself against the cultural influences referred to above, much of Protestantism embraced them. Individualism became the hallmark of Protestantism.

In agreement with the spirit of the age, the reformers taught the doctrines of the "priesthood of all believers" and of *Sola Scriptura*. Both of these principles emphasized the individual's immediate relationship with God and with the Scriptures, that is, without the indispensable mediation of the church. It must be noted, however, that the magisterial reformers' emphasis on these doctrines was based on an attempt to rid the church of various Medieval views and practices that had crept in, rather than on a dissatisfaction with the authoritarianism of the church. Luther, for one, insisted on the need for an institutional church, albeit not in the Roman Catholic sense, which would mediate individuals' access to the Word of God and regulate the spiritual and moral lives of believers. Likewise, John Calvin insisted that one cannot have God as a Father, unless one considered the church as their mother.[23] Like Cyprian, he believed that there was no salvation outside of the church.[24] The vestiges of Roman Catholic institutionalism in the reformers' teachings were perhaps the reason why they continued to maintain close ties with the

state,[25] at times using its judicial structures to enforce uniformity of belief.[26]

Thus, while the magisterial reformers repudiated the dependence model bequeathed to them by Roman Catholicism and attempted to create ecclesiastical structures in harmony with the doctrine of the "priesthood of all believers,"[27] in some ways they continued to perpetuate a mentality of dependence. It was perhaps this ambiguity that prompted Ernst Troeltsch to observe that the Magisterial Reformation, at best, only modified the Roman Catholic ecclesiology of the Middle Ages. The Catholic approach, he believed, was simply fitted with a more individualistic veneer, but the Medieval attempt to regulate the whole of life, including the personal beliefs of the individual, was still strongly in place.[28] While Troeltsch's position may be an oversimplification of the complex historical and religious milieu of the 16th century, it nevertheless highlights the problem that plagued the Magisterial Reformation, and that was never fully resolved.[29]

In contrast, the radical reformers of the 16th century, represented by various Anabaptist groups and fiercely opposed by the magisterial reformers, recognized the radical implications of these Protestant doctrines, and brought them to their ultimate conclusion. While the various groups that came under the umbrella of the Radical Reformation may have had different agendas, they all agreed that the success of the Reformation depended on a complete return to biblical Christianity. The Anabaptists asserted that although the magisterial reformers had emphasized the role of the Scripture, they had not sufficiently freed themselves from Catholic thinking, as evidenced, for example, in their continual support of the alliance between church and state. The Anabaptists fiercely opposed such an alliance, which, they asserted, tended to curtail religious liberty by allowing the use of force to coerce doctrinal uniformity.[30] Salvation, they argued, in no way depended on church membership or assent to doctrinal formulations handed down from above. Thus, while some groups of Anabaptist produced confessions of faith, such as the *Schleitheim Confession* (1527), for the most part they were "reluctant to issue writings of dogmatic content."[31] For the

Anabaptists, the true church of God was in heaven; the church on earth was just an assembly of baptized and regenerated Christians[32] in which "every individual believer had the right to interpret Scripture as he pleased."[33] This stance, which raised "the private judgment of the individual . . . above the corporate judgment of the church,"[34] resulted in many factions.[35] Thus, the implications of *Sola Scriptura* and the "priesthood of all believers" were fully realized in the Radical Reformation, ultimately resulting in the triumph of individualism and subjectivism.

This situation was exacerbated by the Enlightenment, which relegated religion to the realm of private experience,[36] as well as by the rise of two prominent, primarily Protestant movements in the 19th and 20th centuries; namely, Liberal theology and Neo-orthodoxy. Liberal theology emphasized a personal and subjective religious experience, independent of any form of Church authority and, ultimately, even of Scripture. In an attempt to rescue Protestantism from the clutches of liberalism and its attitude toward Scripture, Neo-Orthodoxy suggested that although Scripture is not the Word of God in and of itself, it becomes the Word of God when read by the individual, guided by the Holy Spirit. Neo-orthodoxy, in true Kierkegardian fashion, affirmed that truth is personal; God speaks to the individual rather than to the community.[37] Individualism, thus, was a hallmark of each of these movements.

In summary, by shifting the locus of religious authority and combining it with a heavy handed approach to religious dissent, the magisterial reformers inadvertently opened a Pandora's box of religious individualism, which, in the long term, proved hard to control. This was exacerbated by the radicalization of the doctrines of *Sola Scriptura* and the "priesthood of all believers" by the radical reformers, as well as by the influence of the Enlightenment upon Protestantism. As a result, "the monopoly of a single confession" was forever broken.[38]

A rudimentary scan of the current Protestant theological landscape leaves one with the impression that there are as many interpretations of Scripture as there are interpreters. This is often observed by Catholic apologists, who suggest that the Protestant tendency to value the individual at the expense of the community is to blame for the proliferation of various denominations and sects within Protestant Christianity. It is alleged that, since the Reformation, over twenty five thousand new Protestant denominations have been formed. [39]

In recent years, the excesses of individualism have been recognized within Protestant circles, especially in the United States, and a steady flow of studies dealing with the church have appeared.[40] Some have concluded that the modern Protestant situation is irreparable and have turned to Catholic theology for guidance.[41] As a result, the Roman Catholic Church has experienced an unprecedented rate of evangelical conversions in recent decades. Many of these recent converts have become outspoken and influential Catholic apologists. In contrast, some Protestant writers, rather than being concerned, see increased Protestant individualism as a sign of maturity and hail it as the end of denominationalism.[42]

As the search for answers continues, many ecclesial communities in the Pacific stand at a crossroads. On the one hand, believers can, like some Anabaptist groups, assert that the church is nothing more than a gathering of people who come together to study Scripture, to pray, and to evangelize, bringing under our umbrella people with a variety of doctrinal convictions - thus emphasizing the independence of the individual and sliding toward fragmentation. On the other hand, any form any form of independence can be crushed and the spirit of dependence elevated. While there are no easy solutions to the problem of religious authority facing much of the Protestant world, I would like to propose a third approach that could perhaps make possible a balance between the mutually exclusive forces of dependence and independence.

Towards a Balanced Approach to the Problem of Religious Authority

The terminology for the model I will now explore is adapted from the work of renowned psychologist Sharon Parks,[43] who developed a stage model of young adult faith development. While Parks' model is just one among many and may be considered an overly simplistic representation of faith development, it may nevertheless offer some insight to the problem of religious authority.

Parks suggests that the faith of a young adult develops in stages. The first stage of faith development is characterized by *dependence* upon, and "un-examined trust" toward, one's social and religious systems.[44] In the second stage, the individual moves toward *independence*, beginning to question the beliefs of the formerly unquestionable authority, and to identify him or her self as the source of authority. In the third stage, which Parks labels *interdependence*, individuals recognize their need for community, and are willing to surrender some of their independence.[45] For the relationship between community and individual to be successful, however, the community can not use its' norms and beliefs to intentionally limit the individual's creativity and freedom. In order to continue growing, the individual must have the freedom to question norms and boundaries, and to explore new territory. This process, which can only be accommodated by a healthy, secure community, is crucial for the community's own search for meaning and truth.[46]

How can these insights be applied to the problem of religious authority? As outlined above, the Roman Catholic model required *dependence* of the individual on authority. In contrast, the Protestant model moved toward *independence*. As we shall see, Parks' concept of *interdependence* echoes the New Testament vision for the church, which, I believe, calls for a balance between strong doctrinal consensus and independence. Let us now take a look at both of these.

The Church and Doctrinal Consensus

In recent decades, sociologists and health practitioners have come to recognize the importance of community, over against the Western inclination toward individualism. Scott Peck, for one, views genuine community as the solution to all of the world's problems. "There is evil in the world," he states, "and community is its natural enemy."[47] Like-minded individuals are encouraged to form genuine, all-inclusive communities, to foster their personal growth and to protect them from the world's evils.

Although the Christian community should do and be all of this, the Bible implies that the "church" is more than just a collection of like-minded individuals who come together for the betterment of self and the world. According to the New Testament, the *ecclesia* had its beginning in Christ, who not only established it to be His agent in the world, but also promised His continual presence within it (Matt. 28:20). The church, obviously, is not an individual, but rather, a group of individuals, who come together for the purpose of discerning the will of God and living it in their lives. While divine revelation does and should benefit the individual, its' primary purpose is to benefit the *church*, and its goal is fulfilled when the *church* listens, receives and responds to its message (Rev. 2:7). It is the task of the whole community, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret the divine message, to contextualize it, and to formulate its doctrinal boundaries. "The Christian church," Jaroslav Pelikan notes, "would not be the church as we know it without Christian doctrine."[48] As Tony Campolo forcefully states, "the Church is a gathering of radically committed believers who realize that any subjective prompting of the Spirit must be confirmed by a group of fellow believers before the individual dares follow its leading." The Scriptures invite the local community to "test the spirits to see if they be of God"(1 John 4:1-3 NIV). Thus, when an individual hears the voice of God, these insights should be shared with the community, having confidence that "if all are agreed that the leading is of God," then it is proper to obey the call.[49]

The importance of community consensus is affirmed by Paul, who states that it is the church, not the individual, that is "the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15, NIV). Of course, to protect the integrity of the Scriptures, this statement must be balanced by Paul's other sayings, such as those found in Galatians 1:9 (NIV) "If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned" (Cf. 2 Cor. 11:4). These statements clearly emphasize the authority of Scripture over the community. This, according to Bernard Ramm, is the genius of Protestantism, which excludes the possibility of any Scriptural interpretation from having the same authority as the Scriptures themselves.[50]

An emphasis on doctrinal consensus need not to be seen as a threat, as it provides several benefits. First, a solid doctrinal framework provides a starting point for individual Bible study. As Richard Rice correctly asserts, individuals sometimes attempt an independent study of God's word, without realizing how much they depend on the church for their understanding of the Scriptures. When a believer "overlooks or deliberately ignores the influence of Christian tradition on the way he reads the Bible," Rice writes, he "actually becomes more, rather than less, susceptible to it."[51] In other words, a familiarity with the doctrinal teachings of the community not only enhances independent Bible study, it also make the individual less prone to repeat the errors of theological history. As the 20th century philosopher and novelist, George Santayana, quipped: "Those who ignore the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them."

Second, to use the Apostle Paul's terminology, a strong doctrinal framework prevents the community from being "tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching..." (Eph. 4:14). The purpose of the gifts of the Spirit, given to individual members of the church (v.11), is to build up "the body of Christ . . . until we all reach unity of the faith" (vs.12-13). Thus, "unity of the faith" is a goal to which each ecclesial community should aspire (v.3; cf. Rom 15:5; 1 Cor 1:10). While the church may welcome and encourage new insights that flow from independent Bible study, it is the entire

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ecclesial community, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that is called to decide on the soundness of new teaching (1 John 4:1; 1 Thess 5:21; Phil 1:10). Although "a community-wide discussion is always unwieldy and inefficient . . . it is indispensable to the theological health and spiritual vigor of the community as a whole."[52]

Finally, doctrinal consensus stands as a buffer against the excesses of independence, individualism, and unrestrained freedom. Every social network, be it secular society, the church or the family, constrains the freedom of those who choose to join it. In the case of secular society, members have little choice but to subject themselves to the exigencies of the community. In the case of family, especially adult members, or a religious community, this submission is and should be voluntary. Whether voluntary or not, however, the success of a relationship between community and individual depends, to a degree, on how individuals relate to communal restraints and whether or not they are willing, if necessary, to give up their freedom for the benefit of the community. Ramm notes, "unguided, undisciplined, and unchallenged freedom is no great blessing. . . . The highest spiritual personality is realized by the surrender of a measure of freedom in obedience to a person, a system of moral teaching, or an institution."[53] The community may, at times, need to protect itself from particularly aggressive individuals whose aim is its destruction. Such situations, however, are rare and need to be approached with extreme caution and Christian love.

An ecclesial community that emphasizes doctrinal consensus is, however, constantly tempted by authoritarianism or dependence. The temptation is particularly strong when Christian communities elevate their own Scriptural interpretation as the final bastion of all truth. A balanced approach to the problem of religious authority, however, must guard itself against the dangers of authoritarianism. This can be accomplished in several ways. First, the church must acknowledge its' dependence on the authority of Scripture. It is the Bible, rather than a particular interpretation, that is the Word of God, and that should, in all circumstances, be seen as the authority for the Christian community. Second, the church must recognize that Scriptural interpretations may

vary, depending upon circumstances. Finally, a balanced approach to authority can defend itself against authoritarianism by recognizing the value of the individual. It is to this that we now turn.

The Individual

Many faith development theorists believe that individuals may not reach spiritual maturity unless, at some point in their journey, they move in opposition to authority.[54] This may be a difficult and painful time for both the community (or family) and the individual, especially if the community functions in an authoritarian manner and resists the individual's move towards independence. Much pain can be avoided, however, if the community recognizes that independence is a necessary part of human development; and if, rather than defending its' rights, the community provides a nurturing environment within which the individual is safe to explore.[55] It is only within such an environment that individuals can develop trust, learn to recognize the value of their own judgments, and begin to take responsibility for deciding between competing claims for truth.[56] While the move towards independence may at times result in the individual's rejection of communal beliefs, this risk must be taken, as, ultimately, it not only facilitates the growth of the individual, but also enriches the community's own understanding of truth, thus preventing its' stagnation. Consequently, rather than being a threat to the community, the individual's move towards independence provides opportunity for the growth of the community.[57]

While recognizing the limitations of "stage of faith" theories,[58] these insights may nevertheless help us to understand the limitations of an authoritarian system of church governance. Within such a system, the emphasis is on unquestioning acceptance of communal beliefs, to the neglect of individual exploration of the Scriptural message. Any deviation from the doctrinal *status quo* evokes strong emotions and fierce opposition. A religious community functioning in this mode often sees itself as the medium between God and the individual, thus downplaying individuals' God-given ability to search for "truth" themselves. It must be remembered, however, that while God, through

His Spirit, reveals Himself to the community, He also speaks to individuals within the community. This is perhaps what Paul had in mind when he admonished the Thessalonians: "Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thess 5:19, KJV). For these reasons, individual reflections on communal beliefs, although sometimes threatening to the community, must be expected.

To the adolescent who rebels against the establishment, and to the theologian who explores new territory, the church must provide a safe and nurturing environment. Although independent thinking may ultimately result in the individuals' rejection of communal beliefs, a communal attitude of love and nurture may prevent negative feelings on the part of those who leave, and may facilitate their return to, the community. It certainly has a positive impact on those remaining within the community. In my youth, I was discouraged from asking questions about church beliefs. The thought was that questioning resulted in doubt. Such thinking still prevails in some quarters. It is my belief that a church with a balanced approach to religious authority, a church that recognizes the value of the individual to the community, can not only withstand, but should also encourage, independent thinking. Encouraging individuals to think independently should not be seen, however, as a call for arbitrary and indiscriminate doctrinal revision, but rather, as an invitation for some individuals within the church to search their Bibles, meditate and pray, and then, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to suggest ways in which the Biblical message may be made more relevant to their own generation.

Thus, a balanced approach to church authority allows individual expression of faith. Individuals within the community have diverse personalities, with different sets of experiences and thus, at times, different approaches to the Biblical message. An interdependent community recognizes these differences and considers them an asset, rather than a threat, as they contribute to the church's understanding of truth. Individual differences inevitably create conflict; however, conflict need not be a threat to the community. Within a community functioning in the dependence mode, which is based on doctrinal unanimity, conflict

is highly destructive, as it threatens the foundations upon which the community is based; however, within an interdependent community, conflict, while undesirable and often painful, is seen as an opportunity for re-evaluation and growth. "Truth" that cannot withstand scrutiny may not be worth following.

I believe that for a multicultural, interdependent community of faith functioning within a post-modern context, complete doctrinal unanimity might not be possible. When doctrinal consensus becomes the only, uncompromising goal of an ecclesial community, relationships suffer and fragmentation increases. While wide-ranging doctrinal consensus is indeed a worthy and Scripturally supported objective of an ecclesial community, it must also facilitate the growth of individuals towards spiritual maturity and allow a measure of freedom to explore. This can only be achieved if the community responds to the call of Christ: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

Conclusion

In this paper, I explored, from a historico-theological perspective, two models according to which a religious body may exercise its authority. First, I examined the *dependence* model, evident primarily within the Roman Catholic communion before the Second Vatican Council. Next, I discussed the *independence* model, which became the hallmark of much of Protestantism. I then proposed that a balanced approach to the problem of religious authority should be one of *interdependence*. Without a knowledge of its' developmental history, the contemporary church all too often oscillates between dependence and independence, neither of which is ideal. The ability to maintain a balance between these mutually exclusive forces is, I believe, the "holy grail" of ecclesiology. The ideal of interdependence will probably never be attained on earth, where, in Luther's words, *Ecclesia semper reformanda est* (the Church is always in the process of reforming herself). This, however, should not preclude the church's continual effort toward the ideal. While Christianity as a whole is too fragmented to adopt a uniform authority model, I

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believe that individual faith communities have the potential to come close to the ideal of an interdependent model of authority.

Notes

[1]For the problems faced by the early reformers in this area see Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform, 1250-1550* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 340-351.

[2]As it will become evident later in this paper, I am indebted to Sharon Parks for the use of these terms.

[3]This paper is limited to the problem of religious authority within Western Christianity.

[4]Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 23-25, 76-80.

[5]Edmund Hill, *Ministry and Authority* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988), 32.

[6]Campenhausen, 76.

[7]Maxwell Staniford, trans., *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, ed., Robert Baldwick and Betty Radice (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1972), 9, 234; Ignatius, *Magnesians*, 3; 6:4, in Staniford, 88; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4:26.2 (trans. Alexander Roberts, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1868); Campenhausen, 91-92, 102, 171-174;

[8]Cyprian, *Epistles* 68.8 (*ANF* 5:375); Adalbert Davids, "One or None: Cyprian on the Church and Tradition," in *The Unifying Role of the Bishop*, ed. Edward Schillebeeckx (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 47; Robert Rainy, *The Ancient Catholic Church* (Edingurgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 512-514; Richard McBrien, *Catholicism* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 867-868.

[9]Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.26.2; Cyprian, *Letter* 62; Peter Hinchliff, *Cyprian of Carthage and the Unity of the Christian Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1974), 40-41.

[10]Carlos Alfredo Steger, *Apostolic Succession: In the Writings of Yves Congar and Oscar Cullmann* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1993), 17-19; Francis A. Sullivan, "Apostolic Succession," *Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (1995), 77-79.

[11]Thus Cyprian wrote: "Whence you ought to know that the bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop; and if any one be not with the bishop, that he is not in the Church." (*Letter* 68.8)

[12]At this juncture, it is important to note that within Eastern Orthodoxy, religious authority developed in a more collegial manner. A detailed discussion of religious authority within Eastern Orthodoxy, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

[13]For a succinct description of the circumstances surrounding the issuance of the bull, see J. Derek Holmes and Bernard W. Bickers, *A Short History of the Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 100-02, and T. S. R. Boase, *Boniface VIII* (London: Constable and Company, 1933), 316-19.

[14]Justo L. González, *A History of Christian Thought*, 3 vols. (Nashville: TN: Abingdon Press, 1987), 3:247; Christopher O'Donnell, *Ecclesia: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 451; Michael D. Place, "From Solicitude to Magisterium," *Chicago Studies* 17 (1978):235-36; Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 181.

[15]August Hasler, *How the Pope Became Infallible: Pius IX and the Politics of Persuasion* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1981), 91. This statement was uttered by Pius IX when challenged by Cardinal Filippo Guidi, who spoke during the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) in favor of limiting the scope of Papal infallibility. Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 231.

[16]Jon Nilson, "The Rights and Responsibilities of Theologians: A Theological Perspective," in *Readings in Moral Theology: Dissent in the Church*, ed. Charles Curran and Richard A. McCormick (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 13.

[17]*Gaudium et spes* 62, in Walter Abbott, ed. *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 270; cf. Scott Appleby, "The Contested Legacy of Vatican II," *Notre Dame Magazine* 28 (Summer 1999): 25; Nilson, 29.

[18]During the writing of this article, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger entered the third year of his pontificate as Benedict XVI. Prior to his election, he was the Vatican's Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a doctrinal watchdog of the Roman Catholic Church. His prefecture was marked by little tolerance toward various post-Vatican II doctrinal aberrations. It remains to be seen if his pontificate will continue along similar lines.

[19]In 1998, a renowned Roman Catholic theologian, Cardinal Avery Dulles, wrote in a note to a friend: "I hope that between us (and with much help

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from others) we can help contain some of the madness than now passes for Catholic Christianity" (My personal collection).

[20]Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: Reformation of Church and Dogma*, vol. 4 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 10.

[21]Joseph Lortz, "Why Did the Reformation Happen," in *The Reformation: Basic Interpretations*, ed. Lewis W. Spitz (Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company, 1972), 122-124.

[22]Ernst Troeltsch, "Renaissance and Reformation," in *The Reformation: Basic Interpretations*, ed. Lewis W. Spitz (Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company, 1972), 28-30.

[23]Pelikan, 173-174; John Calvin, *Institutes*, 4. 1. 1.

[24]Pelikan, 178. Calvin devotes the entire fourth book of his *Institutes* to ecclesiology. In section 1 of book 4 he states: "there is no salvation out of the church."

[25]Roland H. Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), 96.

[26]The infamous case of Servetus (1511-1553) and the reformers' attitude towards the Anabaptists may serve as examples. For a complete account of the events leading to Servetus' execution, see Roland H. Bainton, *Hunted Heretic: The Life and Death of Michael Servetus* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953).

[27]Bainton, 117-122.

[28]Ernst Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress: A Historical Study of the Relation of Protestantism to the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 48, 70. Cf. Bainton, 115.

[29]In 1570, Theodore Beza, a Calvinist theologian and Calvin's successor in Geneva, denounced any form of religious tolerance as "a most diabolical dogma because it means that every one should be left to go to hell in his own way." Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Atheneum, 1977), 319.

[30]Williston Walker, *A History of Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), 327; Bainton, 99-101. It is to be noted that prior to gaining the state's backing, the reformers also argued for freedom of religion according to the individual's conscience.

[31]Pelikan, 314.

[32]F. H. Littell, *The Origin of Sectarian Protestantism: A Study of the Anabaptist View of the Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 69, 86-87, 89, 95-98.

[33]Alister McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 182.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Pelikan, 314.
[36]Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 30-31.
[37]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1936), 127.
[38]Bainton, 211.
[39]Scott and Kimberly Hahn, *Rome Sweet Home* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 73.
[40]See, for example, Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995); and Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier, ed. *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005).
[41]Alex Jones, *No Price too High: A Pentecostal Preacher Becomes a Catholic* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2006); Louis Bouyer, *The Spirit and Form of Protestantism* (Princeton: Scepter Publishers, 2001); David Currie, *Born Fundamentalist, Born Again Catholic* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1996); Hahn, *Rome Sweet Home* (1993); Thomas Howard, *Evangelical is Not Enough* (San Francisco: Ignatius , 1984). This is only a sample of many Evangelical authors who have turned their back on Protestantism and have joined the Roman Catholic Church in recent years.
[42]George Barna, *Revolution* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005).
[43]Sharon Parks, *The Critical Years: The Young Adult Search for a Faith to Live By* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986); cf. Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 2000).
[44]Parks, *The Critical Years*, 54.
[45]Ibid., 57.
[46]Ibid., 61.
[47]M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum* (New York: Simon and Shuster, Inc., 1987), 328.
[48]Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 1.
[49]Tony Campolo, *A Reasonable Faith: Responding to Secularism* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 108
[50]Bernard Ramm, *The Pattern of Religious Authority* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 56. Ramm adds that the authority of the church "is never final, never unquestionable, and never primary. [It]

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must always be under the supremacy and lordship of the revelation itself." Ibid., 60.

[51]Richard Rice, *Reason and the Contours of Faith* (Riverside: La Sierra University Press, 1991), 92.

[52]Fritz Guy, *Thinking Theologically* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1999), 43.

[53]Ramm, 42.

[54]J. A. Shelly, *The Spiritual Needs of Children* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1982), 70. Cf. Charles M. Shelton, *Adolescent Spirituality: Pastoral Ministry for High School and College Youth* (New York: Crossroads, 1992); Tim Kimmel, *Why Christian Kids Rebel: Trading Heartbreak for Hope* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004); Parks, 55; Roger Dudley, *Why Teenagers Reject Religion* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Ass. 1978), 27-41; Rex L. Rook, "Disobedience, Rebellion, and Defiance in the Believer as Exemplified in the Adolescent Stage of Life," *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, July, 1973, 56-61;

[55]Dudley, 36-38.

[56]Martin A. Johnson, "Family Life and Religious Commitment," *Review of Religious Research*, Spring 1973, 144-150.

[57]The Gospel of Luke appears to provide some support for the existence of this process in the life of Jesus. While His development was different to other teenagers due to the circumstances of His birth, we may draw some analogies. In Luke 2:41-52 we find Jesus for the first time individuating from the faith of His parents.

[58]At times "stage of faith" thinking can be seen as limiting because it can leave the mistaken impression that spiritual development is invariable, smooth and cumulative.

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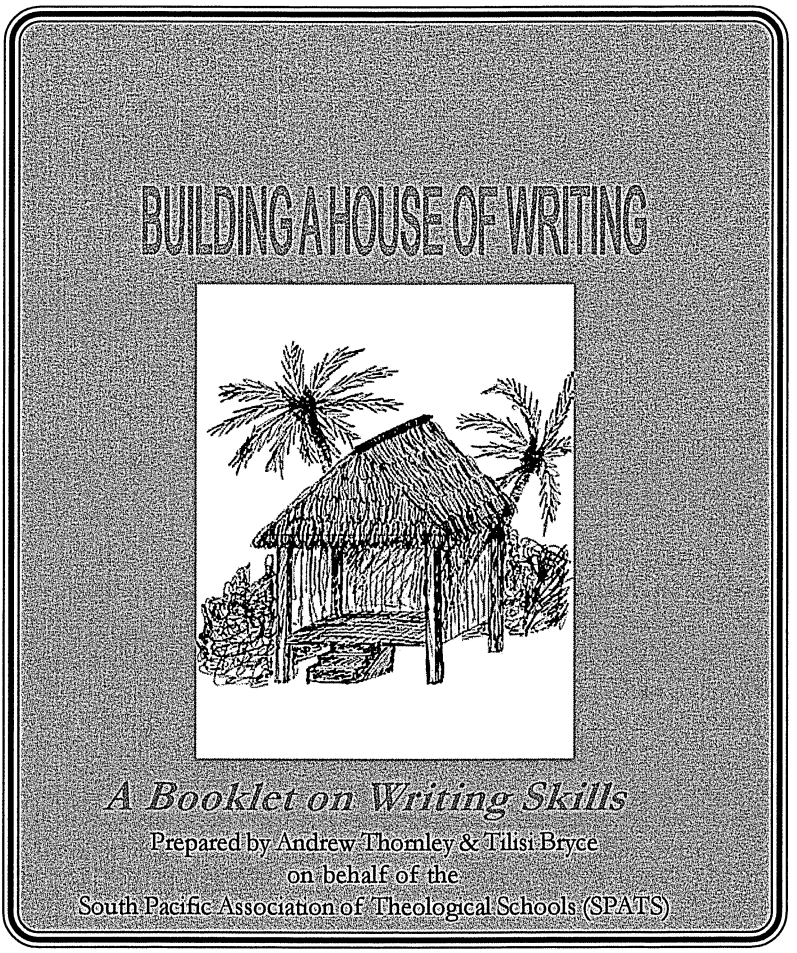
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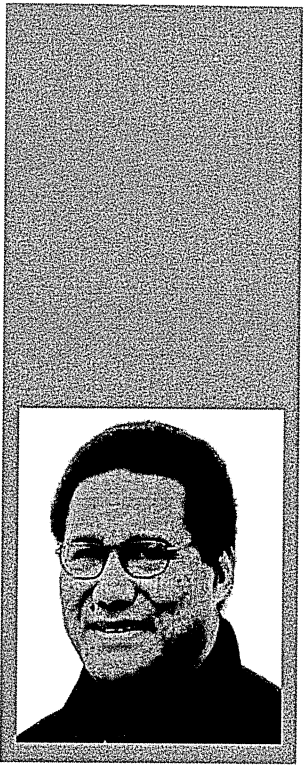
O MY BEAUTIFUL NUKU'ALOFA
Terra d'Amore – Land of Love



Mikaele Paunga

Fr. Dr. Mikaele Paunga lectures in theology at the Pacific Regional Seminary, Suva, Fiji Islands
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mpaunga@hotmail.com

This is what the Author had to say about the Poem.....

"There is no specific background to this poem. It was my poetic lamentation when I saw Nuku'alofa on fire. As a Priest who was far away from the scene, whose heart was very much with the people of Tonga, and have been following quite closely the situation, I was greatly saddened by the resort to violence and burning.

Again as a priest, one is far away from the situation. One does not know exactly the facts. I wanted to respond and to write something from a minister's point of view or theological reflectioon on the situations in both Fiji and Tonga. But, I could not since I was far away from the reality. I felt handicapped as it were. All I could do was to somehow follow in the footsteps of the prophets and Jesus lamenting over Jerusalem. Writing poem was an option that I took. You still convey your message across but in a non direct way. It seems much more acceptable. It is also a spiritual reflection but best seen as a poetic lamentation. I received an overwhelming response from Tongans all over the world thanking me for it."

The poem has been published too in the Australian Catholic EJournal of Theology Feb-March issue. I have also added the footnotes to explain the Tongan words and phrases for non-Tongan readers."

"Happy Reading....."

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O MY BEAUTIFUL NUKU'ALOFA

Terra d'Amore – Land of Love

A poetic, tearful lamentation at what has befallen our beautiful island of Tonga

by Mikaele Paunga

Dedicated to My God, my King and Country

Words cannot explain how I gaze you ablaze
How your beauty has been blood-stained and defaced
My land of love – Nuku'alofa, you have become tears of blood
Your fire of love has become fire of destruction
O! my land of love, what have you done?

The news of your desolation resounds through the universe
Aching my soul with an immense abyss of sadness
Why have we allowed impatience, madness and unruliness
To rule over reasonableness, calmness and friendliness,
O! my *Terra d'Amore*, what have you done?

Your face is so disfigured that I could hardly recognize you
Your very heart carved open by hands emanating from you
I am relegated to numbness, lost for words, shocked to base
Stealing, looting, burning, demolition, am put to silence
O! my Nuku'alofa, look at what they have done to you!

Democracy! how can you rise up and proclaim victory
Amidst ruins, dead bodies, heart aches, now your responsibility
Is this your true nature to resort to fire, blood and force to win!
It sounds more like Beelzebul, a far cry from justice, has claimed its sting.
O! my Friendly Islands, look at what pro-democracy has done to you!

My beloved! how can burning and pillaging become means for democracy?
How can killing be termed freedom of expression and freedom of speech?
How can demolition and violence become love and justice for a country?
My Kings, ancestors and forefathers, rise up, hear and see
The loud and inconsolable cry of your beloved country

O dignified Democracy! Where is your authenticity?
Your noble values lie in respect of human dignity and human property;
Protector of truth, human freedom, life and its sanctity;
Upholder of justice and non-violent, in a multicultural society;
Defender of the poor, the voiceless and the rights of the minority
O true and fair Democracy! Where on earth have you been?

O! my Nuku'alofa! if only you could see the tears in my eyes
If only you could hear the solitude sound of my cries
If only my heart could be laid bare before you
So you can see it aching and wailing in love for you

O! My Nuku'alofa
O! My once friendly isles, my land of love,
How can I soothe the aches and pains that I feel for you?
How can I possibly sing a love song for you?
When your heart of love, kindness, friendliness have been rid of you?
O! My Nuku'alofa, my *Terra d'Amore*!
O! My beloved Tonga *ko e fonua malu*,[1]
How can you destroy the foreigners who *fakamalumalu*[2] in you?
When your own sons and daughters everywhere are foreigners too,
Yet never have they been subjected to such barbaric rule,

O! my land of love, how can this be spoken of you?
My Tonga, my Nuku'alofa, my Friendly Islands!
Where is your wisdom, *fofola e fala kae fai e tâlaga*[3]
Where are your noble values of respect, calmness and forgiveness?
Have we replaced them with impatience, greediness and personal gains?
O! my noble Tongan values, O please stand up, speak to me, where are you?

My Tonga, my Nuku'alofa, my land of love,
If I forget you, let my whole being wither
How can I forget you and prefer foreign systems and gods to you?
Have you gone mad because you have been unjustly treated?
Or have you gone astray because you are greedy and power hungry?

Let me renew my covenant with you
Let me once more have some respect for you
Let me rise now with new songs of justice
Of love, of hope and of peace
My Nuku'alofa, my friendly islands

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Behold! you have neither silver nor gold,
You have *the fe'ofo'ofani*[4], *fetokoni'aki*[5], *and fefaka'apa'apa'aki*[6],
Sharing, reciprocal love, wonderful hospitality and *angai-kainga*[7]
These are your God-given silver and gold,
These are your God-given source of happiness and joy

My beloved King,
My beloved Tonga,
My beloved country,
My friendly isles
My God-fearing people
My land of love,
My Nuku'alofa,
Though you have been deeply wounded,
Severely scarred, debased and defaced,
I love you still,
I treasure you still,
I still call you: MY VERY OWN!

Fr. Dr. Mikaele Paunga SM wrote this poem in response to the political situations in his homeland, Tonga, last November 2006.

Notes

[1] Safe land
[2] Take refuge
[3] Spread the mat then dialogue
[4] Reciprocal love
[5] Help each other
[6] Mutual respect
[7] Family conscious and caring

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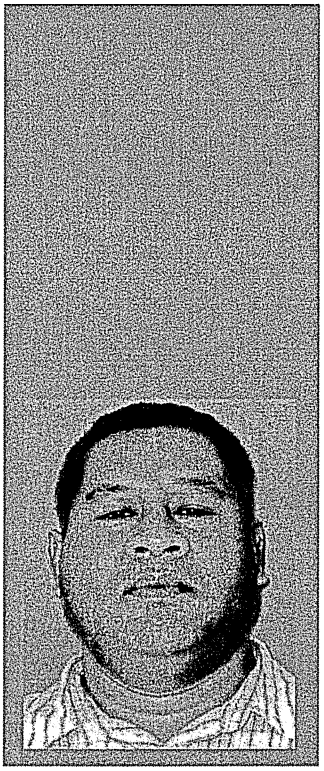

The Concept of the Sacred from a Melanesian Perspective

with special reference to the people of Aroma and their neighboring Papuans

Koloma Makewin

Rev. Koloma Makewin is an Ordained Minister of the United Church in Papua New Guinea. He is currently in his final year of study at the Pacific Theological College Fiji, for a Master's Degree.

Abstract

The author of this article contends that the concept of the sacred in Aroma has sociological function. The evidence drawn from major communal activities underscores the worldview that informs how sacred is understood as part of everyday experience. Further notions of this concept in other Papuan neighboring communities are a vital component asserting the function of religion sociologically in the light of the known theories of religion.

Introduction

The word, "sacred", is described by the Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary as "that which is connected with God or a god and is considered to be holy as in the case of a holy mountain, holy temple or an altar."[1] It implies something very important treated with "awe and great respect". In other words it speaks of sanctity of living and non-living things or of persons.[2] The "holy"

however is the correspondingly marked term referring to special places or things that have been "set apart from the ordinary" as belonging in some special way to God.[3] How this concept has been understood in the world of the Aroma[4] and other Papuans and its assessment in light of proposed theories of religion and with a brief view of challenges of de-sacralisation posed by Christianity and globalization is therefore the concern addressed in this paper.

To provide a response to this concern, this paper firstly describes the Melanesian vision of the cosmos since it informs the understanding of the sacred in the Aroma context. Two components are interrelated here. On the one hand the idea of "taboo space" is discussed in terms of physical centre of things and the architectural significance of traditional buildings. On the other hand the myth of the coconut interprets their relevance in terms of the meaning of the taboo space and interprets cosmos as a sacred entity. Secondly, what follows is that this view of the sacred is then summarized in the context of some of the communal or societal activities. It draws on implications from these communal activities and establishes the understanding of the norms of the community or society for without which there is no sacredness and therefore no society. Thirdly, an assessment will be given in light of some proposed theories of religion studied so far. Assessment in here means to identify the phenomenon of the sacred in the Aroma religious experience that may be inclusive and exclusive of other theories of religion. Fourthly, there will be a conclusion with a brief emphasis on the forces of desacralisation.

Melanesian Vision of the Cosmos

In the Aroma experience the sacred derives from one's vision of the cosmos and relationship to it. It associates itself with the idea of taboo space and the physical centre of things. One such place commended with the idea of taboo space was the traditional house buildings called *numapara*.[5] In most Aroma villages, the *numapara* is the house of the spiritual meetings found at the centre of the whole village. It became the place where the sphere of human action intersects with

the sphere of the spiritual realm. It was therefore a holy house where two spheres co-existed thus transaction between the two spheres became possible. The centre of the *numapara* was where the ancestor's spirits were accessible in a special and immediate way. The only reason why it was built at the centre of the village was due to its appearance as the centre-point for their world.

The architecture of the *numapara* symbolized the understanding of the cosmos. The poles (*magani para*) of the house or the roof pointing upwards represented the dome sky.[6] Totemic animals and objects were skillfully carved beneath the floor of *numapara* and the poles. Coconuts are hanged beneath the roof symbolizing the passage of the spirits.[7] Different clans identify themselves with specific totems and adore them as agents for certain spirits or gods. In otherwords they became the contact point where communication with the spirit world was made possible. In many Aroma and Papuan villages the centre of spiritual power is at the physical centre of things. For example, sacred objects or graveyards were at the centre of a building or centre of a village. The experiences of our close neighbors also have this worldview. The Motuan Hiri trading expeditions in the *lagatois* shows evidence of this view.[8] For the purposes of communicating with the spirits of the sea there was a centre place called "*irutahuna*" where the captain of the *lagatoi* would sit throughout the voyage. [9] The object was that this place was held to be a place where spiritual forces maintain a point of contact with the physical world.[10] This elucidates the fact that centre of spiritual power was at the physical centre of things and was revered as taboo space. Rosenfeld defines that space as that locality that becomes a position by the effects of power[11]. We now turn to discuss the myth of the Coconut which interprets symbolically the Aroma world as a sacred place.

Myth of the Coconut

The Melanesian vision of the cosmos and his relationship to it provides the arena for understanding the beginning of life as a sacred

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entity. [12] Such understanding can only be explained by re-telling our own myths of creation. Consider for example this Aroma myth written by Ronnie Tom Ole which functions to understand the idea of the sacred in the Melanesian view of creation. It is appropriate here to re-tell the myth that,

> "Melanesians say that once human beings had no coconuts when they cooked taro they had no coconut milk to put on it. In the early days of creation there used to be a village near the sea. The men who lived there went fishing every morning. But they did not catch many fish except one man who went by himself. He could catch more fish than he could eat. "This is very strange indeed" the men said. So they had a meeting about it. While the meeting was in progress a boy stood listening and thought of a plan, and he put it before the gathering. "Tomorrow I will follow him and see what he does." The next day the boy did as he planned and followed the man till he came to the sea-shore. Then the boy hid behind a tree and watched the man carefully. This is what he saw: the man put down his fishing basket and then took hold of his head with his two hands. He pulled and pulled till his head came off. He placed his head on the sand and he walked into the sea till the water came up to the middle of his body. After he had stopped in the water the men bent down till his throat was level with it. Then the fish came swimming in great numbers and swam down the man's throat. When he had enough he walked slowly back up to the shore. He shook the fish out and put his head on again. The boy who witnessed all this was afraid and he ran home quickly and told others about it. The next day all man went quickly to the sea-shore to see what happened. They saw the man took off his head

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and got into the water. Then one of the men ran out from the trees and taking the head he threw it in the middle of the bush. After a short while the owner came out of the water and began feeling for his head. When he could not find his head he ran back into the sea and changed into a big spirit fish. He swam out of sight. A few days later the boy who first saw the man started to think about the head, went into the bush and try to find it. When he came to the place it had been thrown he found a palm tree growing. Nobody knew what the tree was. It had nuts on it. The men who saw this then were afraid to eat them. But one of the women took a nut and ate the inner part. When the others saw that she was not armed, they ate some as well. Melanesians say if you look at the nut when the husk has been taken away you can see a face of a man." [13]

Function of the Myth

Several notions of life emerge from this myth. Firstly, when Aroma people interpret this myth, it articulates a sense of 'awe' and 'wonder' in relation to the mystery of the symbolic universe or the cosmos.[14] It further articulates that life is transcendental and re-creative. It opens the dimension of the Aroma world to mystery. Symbolically it also teaches that the Aroma world and the wider Melanesian cosmos are all spiritual. Secondly, this myth gives a sociological orientation in that the Aroman as a Melanesian is aware that he or she is born into a spiritual world and exists and functions in the spirit world. Re-telling this myth validates and affirms the existence of a certain spiritual order because it orients man to nature and to society surrounded by spirits.[15] The myth therefore understands the origin of life as a sacred entity and articulates the symbolic significance of the coconut which will be referred to later in certain communal activities. In what follows we will describe how this view of sacredness of life finds more concrete expression in the communal or societal activities which represent the whole of life.

Hunting Expeditions

In the hunting expeditions men would select certain bushes or forests where they hunt for wallabies, pigs and cuscus. If a particular forest was chosen for the hunting expedition, the hunters would first of all perform rituals. The owner of the forest sits close to the centre of the sacred tree while those who would hunt dance around him with chants and utterances of incantations addressed to the spirits (*alima palauria*) of the forests. In this ritual, fresh coconuts are placed closer to the centre of the sacred tree (*orolopu*) and in the event when the coconut bursts open it became a sure sign that the spirits have responded favourably to the dancers thus would result in a fortune of killing large number of pigs and wallabies for consumption.

In such hunting expeditions the houses of the hunters were always kept tabooed. Several taboos were observed. Firstly, women were not allowed to sit where the hunters normally sat when they were at home. Secondly, women were restricted to speak of the names of their husbands, uncles and brothers on hunting expedition and were forbidden to sweep the house with brooms or grass skirts while the children were restricted to play. In the event these tabooed rules were not obeyed the hunting expedition became unsuccessful in that no wallabies or pigs would be sighted and none killed for consumption. The causes are that spirits were offended by those at home in one way or the other by not adhering to the tabooed acts. In the same way, men of Aroma also embarked on dugong (*lui*) fishing expedition in the reefs.[16] Paul Sillitoe records that this is also evident in the practice of our Kiwai neighbors of Papua who practice taboos for fishing purposely for turtles and dugongs through ritual management.[17]

Gardening and Planting

Different seasons had their unique ways of practicing the sacred of which banana planting is one such time. When it is time for planting banana, the planter observes certain gardening rituals as well. This ritual would again include observing dietary restrictions and fasting. The

planter of the banana restricts himself from eating meat and certain food for almost a week. Secondly, he would also restrict himself from chewing betelnut from other people's lime pots and no-one would be permitted to chew from his lime-pot as well. This means that strict observation of dietary rules became part of the ritual that enabled the planter to communicate with the fertility gods (*warapa palauria*) who in return was to bless the land for abundance. Again, in the third place sexual abstinence was strictly observed. There have been situations where men who had failed to comply with dietary restrictions are believed to have suffered from physical ailments.[18] One common result would be seen in the premature growth of the bananas in the garden.

Further, observance of the sacred was also associated with taboos placed on young woman who had menstruation and the more recent widows. Young women, who, during their period of menstruation were believed to be impure as well as the young widow who had just buried her husband because of contact with dead corpse. In the event if they did planting in the gardens seeds and new plants of yams, taro and other crops would experience poor growth. From this emerged the idea of contamination which in a sense demarcates the sacred from profane. This belief is still practiced today and is embedded in the purity and contamination codes in the Aroma experience.[19]

Seasonal Festivals or dances

The idea of the sacred was not only seen in the hunting and the gardening situations it also applies to the seasonal festivals or the sacred dances. Towards the end of every year around November when harvest was plentiful and when there was abundance in the gardens with more pigs being raised the traditional dance called *Tovi* was performed. [20] This dance exists today and is observed by strict rules of performance. The dance is often performed on platforms raised some fifty meters above the ground. The use of coconut tree trunks as dance platforms is symbolic and are built in such a way that they can powerfully move up and down as the dancers maneuver along the platforms. Months that lead up to the time of performing the *Tovi* dance would require

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dancers to undergo taboos which include abstinence from sex, observe dietary restrictions and fasting for weeks. They would be required to sleep in the *numapara* separated from the mothers and children. Consistency in the observance of the taboos and weekly practice and re-hearsals are necessary to avoid consequences which many dancers experience, as falling from the dancing platform which can eventually lead to death.[21] This is believed to be consequences of offending the *Tovi* spirits and departure from spiritual order. In the event when a dancer does not adhere to the taboos of the dance, as a result, falls from the high platforms several steps would be taken to restore or maintain harmony with the spiritual order. First, the relatives of the one who falls will have to kill a pig and place it on the spirit's altar for sacrifice. Such action marks an act of confession and seeking forgiveness so that wrath of the *Tovi* spirits can be withdrawn. In otherwords reconciliation with the spirits was sought through the killing and sacrifice of pigs offered on altars. This was a human but communal response to the spiritual order.

Norms of the Community or Society

Given the three common societal activities the norms of the society emerged out of human interaction with the spiritual order. These norms encoded in varying forms of taboos aforementioned were regulated by the spiritual order.[22] The existence of the practices of the sacred taboos in Aroma is also evident in the tribal groups of other close neighbors in the Gulf of Papua. Francis Edgar records that Kerema sailors would observe dietary restrictions and sexual taboos and even fasting for the purposes of successful sea voyages for trade.[23] In the Aroma experience as well as among neighboring communities the whole of communal or societal activities was consecrated towards upholding that Spiritual order because the whole cosmos was spiritual. Communal activities therefore derived their source from the spiritual order. The chief object was because the spirits gave the customs to the order in the community.[24] The words of Roger Bassham are worth pondering since it summarizes this reality that:...

> All major activities in the life of the community associated with gardening, hunting, fertility, birth, initiation, marriage, death, fighting and reconciliation had appropriate acts of worship related to them to maintain and deepen the relationship between the participant and the spiritual forces at work in these activities.[25]

This further asserts that the pattern of social behavior in whole aspects of life in the community was governed by the spiritual order. Moral behavior and maintenance of good relationship between husband and wives, family members within kinship, neighbors and others in the community and to the whole of nature are all considered to be spiritual. On the contrary, departure from the spiritual order in any way was considered offensive to the spirits; hence the 'awe' or the sacred was protected or preserved by adherence to the norms regulated by the spiritual order. Restoration of broken relationships with neighbor and community and the nature was essential, thus affirming the sociological functions of what was religious in their own experience. This underscores the fact that the norms of the community have supernatural sanctions, hence if there are no norms, then there is no taboo, likewise, if therefore is no taboo or sacred then there is no society.

Assessment in view of some theories of Religion

In view of the theories of religion there are either exclusive or inclusive features in the religious experience of Aroma people. The religious experience of the Aroma people implies certain phenomenon or features that correspond to some aspects of the theories. There is, undoubtedly, in the Aroma and the Papuan religious experience the belief in the Spirits or the ancestral spirits because the cosmos is sacred by origin. Substantively, this feature consolidates with Edward Tylor's observation that religion is namely belief in spiritual beings" although his system of thought stems from animism.[26] This follows that the Aroma and the Papuan religious experience identified religion as belief

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in supernatural entities though there are other religions which are not founded upon such concepts.[27] On the other hand the Aroma religious experience also entails what Durkeim observes as distinction between the sacred and profane.[28] Though Goody and Evans Pritchard among the others have not found sacred and profane in some African cultures the understanding of the sacred here is clearly explicated by Durkeim who observes religion as "things set apart and forbidden beliefs and practice."[29] In this case, both Tylor and Durkeim to some extent have some aspects of their theories that are inclusive of the Aroma and the Papuan religious experience. More particularly is how systems of belief and practices as noted with regard to taboo space, hunting expeditions and gardening expressing the sacred phenomenon. Certain places were set apart or better yet forbidden. One difference may only be that while Papuan traditional societies could not be called 'churches' in the strict sense of the word the traditional societies were quite religious, hence they come under moral communities.

Two other theorists are inclusive of the Aroma religious experience. First is that Rudolf Marrett, though from an emotionalist standpoint describes "strangeness of feeling" as the stem of religion, the particular emphasis here is that the "awe" underlying emotions experienced by people is considerably similar to the Polynesian mana.[30] It is here that the term "awe" or *mana* in that sense corresponds to what the Aroma and the Papuan religious experience perceived as the "sacred" to be associated with special places especially the physical centre of things or the taboo space. To be more precise the ritual objects like the coconut, special words of incantations and special trees and totemic symbols were held to be associated with such power. On the other hand, Branislow Malinowski who studied the Trobiand Islanders of Papua doesn't base his ideas on the notions of mana. However, in brief his characterization of the sacred is bound up with an attitude of "awe" and "respect".[31] In observing the mortuary rituals of the Trobiand Islanders he however observed that rituals were not simply individualistic responses to events but were performed as communal activities hence underlying the social dimension of religious experience.[32] Malinowski's view in here dovetails with the Aroma and the Papuan religious

experiences that sacred has to do with social affairs which involved communities.[33] However, there are certain attributes enlisted by Southwold which are not found in Aroma religious experience that also express religion. For example having specialist religious elite or orientation towards salvation from the ordinary conditions of worldly existence and a body of scripture differs are some common aspects as found in other religions and society.[34] One would find that these attributes are not common to Aroma and the Papuan religious experience thus is exclusive of what others may perceive as religion.

Conclusion

This paper, so far, attempts to describe how the concept of the sacred is understood by the people of Aroma as well as in other neighboring communities of Papua. Given the analysis the following major emphases emanates and underline the meaning of sacred to the people of Aroma. Firstly, emanating from the vision of the cosmos the whole of life is sacred which is then understood or perceived as that which is "forbidden" or "tabooed" in communal activities. Further, emanating from the way the physical centre of things were revered, it can be argued that for the Aroma and the Papuans, the sacred is equivalent with power. This is quite similar, at least, with the Polynesian idea of *mana*. One therefore recognizes the sense of its being charged with "power" either for blessing or destruction. The norms, as a result, emerge from the spiritual order which guides, shapes and provides the boundaries for the people of whom these "codes" were vital elements for understanding their own world and their social relationship with others and nature. This affirms therefore that religion through the conception of the sacred has a sociological function for it has social affairs with people in society. However the people of Aroma may well have understood that there was no dichotomy in their cosmos because physical/human and spiritual realms were and are integrated. This integrated view on life is hitherto challenged by modern global processes of dis-integration and change brought by Christianity in Aroma society. One can see today either a form of substitution, or a partial loss of sacred values and in some respects syncretistic features present in

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churches and society at large. For example, placing of the Holy Communion table at the centre of the church building in Aroma is symbolic of the taboo space. Some prefer to sing traditional chants to God with gospel words, which in itself, is a partial change, while some continue to believe in spirits at the same time confess the power of the Holy Spirit. The introduction of sophisticated architecture and the intrusion of taboo space by public space through media for most homes in Aroma are already processes of de-sacralisation.[35]

Notes

[1] *Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary*, 1127.
[2] *Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary*, 1127.
[3] Barbara Hargrove, *The Sociology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Approaches* 2nd edition, (Illinois: Harlan Davidson,) 1989, 32.
[4] The present author has no access to the officially published sources for this but cites a speech given by Dr. Navu Kwapena —a biologist from Aroma village during a cultural festival in which the *Tovi* dance was also performed, in addition, Rev. Dr. James Charlmers who is often called as "The Apostle of Papua" during one of his early visits was accompanied by a Russian naturalist who collected artifacts and other ornaments which are believed to be in Sydney Musem or in Russia. Hence the name "Aroma" was given by the first explorers who set foot along my coast in the 1800's and was due to the sweet smelling herbs and ginger roots which were chewed and worn on the arms and around the waists of the Aroma people. Aroma people are Papuans who reside some 90 kilometers South East of Port Moresby. Dr. Navu Kwapena "Brief History in Relation to Aroma" Short Speech to Aroma Urban Fellowship, Teachers College Waigani. 19th August, 2006.
[5] *Numapara* is a special traditional spiritual house built with materials taken from the forests like posts made from acacia type wood and the roof made of skillfully woven *sago* leaves and cane is used as ropes for tightening its poles that points skywards.
[6] Compare Genesis 11 of the Babel Tower which perhaps in the Mesopotamian or the Hebrew tradition had some similar cosmological functions and one can assume that the tower was raised skywards for the

purpose of communicating with the spirits. See also Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and Profane: The Nature of Religion*, San Diego: Harcourt Bruce & Company, 1959), 42-50.

[7] See page 3 for the myth of the coconut that symbolically articulates the association of the coconut with the spirits.

[8] I am indebted to the elders of 'Rearea village' I pastored in 1999 who introduced me to their sacred *lagatois* which are very big canoes built out of big trees. They are multi-hulled trading vessels compared to big boats used only for the so called Hiri voyages.

[9] Dutton, Tom ed. *The Hiri in History: Further aspects of Long Distance Motu Trade in Central Papua,* (Canberra: The Australian National University, 1982), 10-20.

[10] Dutton, Tom. *The Hiri in History: Further aspects of Long Distance Motu Trade in Central Papua,* 38.

[11] Rosenfeld, Jean Elizabeth. *The Island Broken in Two Halves: Sacred Land and Religious Renewal Movements among the Maori of New Zealand*, (Ann Arbor; Umi, 1994), 1.

[12] Bernard Narakobi, "What is Religious Experience for a Melanesia" in *POINT* 1977: 8-9.

[13] Ronnie Tom Ole "Making Sense of the Oneness of Life: A Melanesian Christian View on Creation" in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* Vol.6. No.2, 1990:36-37.

[14] For the functions of myths see for example Richard L. Sartore ed. *Joseph Campbell & Myth and Mythology*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), 3.

[15] See also Richard L. Sartore. ed. *Joseph Campbell & Myth and Mythology*, 3.

[16] I am indebted to Ila Pagave, son of the Chief from Ganilegi Clan from Aroma for this information.

[17] Paul Sillitoe, *An Introduction to the Anthropology of Melanesia: Culture and Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 32-33.

[18] I am indebted to my wife for this particular information on gardening taboos.

[19] Discussion Notes with Ora Koloma, "Gardening Taboos" Pacific Theological College, 21st September, 2006. 1.

[20] *Tovi* is believed to be a sacred dance because it is performed as a result of abundance in gardening as well as performed in celebration of the fertility gods.

[21] Many falls from the high platforms were described as '*palau vagi*' which means that the spirits had harmed the participants or the dancers because of disobedience that really was the result of departing from the spiritual order.
[22] Compare Narakobi's (1989:56) explanation that social behaviour in Melanesian societies was based on the knowledge of 'good' or 'right' from 'bad or wrong', or code of conduct which derives from human interaction and social relations with human kind and the spirit world whether friendly or hostile.
[23] Francis Edgar Williams, "*The Vailala Madness and Other Essays*" with an introduction edited by Erik Schwimmer, (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1997), 56-57.
[24] Bernard Narakobi, "Law and Custom in Melanesia" in *Point Series No. 12*, (Goroka/Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies/Melanesian Institute for Pastoral Socio-Economic Science, 1989), 5.
[25] Roger Bassham, "Contemporary Worship and Pastoral Concerns" in *Point No.1*: *Christian Worship and Melanesia,* 1990: 103.
[26] Malcom Hamilton *The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspective*, (London/New York: Routledge, 2001). 13.
[27] Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspective,* 14.
[28] Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspective,* 14.
[29] Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspective,*14. See also Barbara Hargrove (1989:35).
[30] Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspective*, 56.
[31] Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspective*, 60.
[32] See The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspective, 60.
[33] See The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspective, 60.
[34] See The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspective, 21.
[35] Rob van Drimmelen, *Faith in Global Economy: A Primer for Christians,* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 116.

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"*Sacred*" Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary,

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